

DEVELOPING LAY LEADERSHIP THROUGH IDENTIFICATION AND  
ASSESSMENT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN A LOCAL AFRICAN  
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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## **ABSTRACT**

# **DEVELOPING LAY LEADERSHIP THROUGH IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN A LOCAL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

by

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This project investigated the relationship between understanding spiritual gifts and the development of servant-leaders within the laity of Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church of Vallejo, California. Four training sessions offered the participants the opportunity to discover their spiritual gifts, assess their affinity for which particular gifts, participate in a program of spiritual development, and become committed to using those spiritual gifts. The results included an increased awareness of the nature of spiritual gifts, and the participants' own spiritual giftedness. Several participants made commitments to seek ways to serve God through the praxis of those gifts in the local church.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to give thanks to God for this journey, for the friends, mentors and colleagues whose counsel and prayers sustained me through this project. To my wife and daughters, thank you for tolerating my frequent absences during this process. To the officers and members of Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church, thank you for your participation in this project. I will always be indebted to you. Without your support, encouragement, and commitment this work would not be possible.

To the Reverend Doctor Harold R. Mayberry, my father in the ministry, thank you for exemplifying what it means to strive for the high calling in Christ Jesus. To my consultants, the Reverend Doctor Leslie R. White, the Reverend Doctor Gloria Barrett, and the Reverend Doctor Damon Powell, thank you for sharing your insights in the development and implementation of this work. To my mentors, Doctor Terry Thomas and Doctor Reginald Dawkins, thank you for your insight, encouragement and guidance in developing a project that seeks to empower spiritually gifted leaders for the Kingdom of God.

## **DEDICATION**

It is with heartfelt love and gratitude I dedicate this work to my wife Vivian, and daughters Vanessa and Victoria, who are God's blessing made manifest in my life. To my late mother Ora, and my late father Bobbie, thank you for teaching me to dream and imparting the courage to work toward that dream.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AMEC	African Methodist Episcopal Church
B.C.E.	Before Common Era
C.E.	Common Era
NATO	North American Treaty Organization
USAFR	United States Air Force Reserve
USN	United States Navy



## **INTRODUCTION**

The focus of this document is the subject of increasing lay leadership through the identification and assessment of spiritual gifts using the servant/leader team-learning model.

Some personal goals include: Developing skill in leadership training by facilitating the training and discipleship growth of lay leaders at Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church; to develop the organizational skills necessary to design and implement an effective Christian Education ministry; and to experience spiritual growth and development in ministry.

Some of the ministry goals include: Engaging the laity of St. Paul in an exploration of spiritual gifts, encouraging members to utilize those gifts in various areas of service, and through the training process, to foster a sense of group identity of the participants as the leaders of the local church.

In Chapter One, “Ministry Focus”, the writer discloses his spiritual journey, the writer’s understanding of the call to ministry, and the writer’s understanding of the role of the Church in the world. This chapter also informs the reader about the setting for the project, the background of the leadership of St. Paul, and the unique congregational characteristics of the context setting. This information is provided to give the reader useful background information about the project.

In Chapter Two, “State of the Art in This Ministry Model”, reviews the literature concerning spiritual gifts and the development of spiritual growth and within the local faith community, with particular emphasis on spiritual gifts in the local church.

Chapter Three, “Theoretical Foundation”, provides insight into the biblical, historical, and theological foundations of this project. Also presented is a discussion on spiritual gifts, and their historic role in the church.

In Chapter Four, “Methodology” a discussion of the implementation and evaluation of this model of ministry is presented. The evaluation process utilized began with an initial written survey which assisted in determining the participant’s present role at St. Paul, as well as their understanding regarding spiritual gifts in a Christian’s life and the life of the church. After the sessions, a post-treatment questionnaire was administered to the context group. This helped to indicate what growth occurred because of the training sessions, bible studies, and sermon series.

In Chapter Five, “Field Experience” discusses the actual implementation of the model of ministry, the data collected, and the experiences that shaped the outcome of the project.

In Chapter Six, “Reflection, Summary, and Conclusion”, discussed the writer’s reflections on this project, what methods worked, what could be done to improve the model, and a summary presentation of this model of ministry.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

The Reverend Hugh K. Wesley is blessed to serve as the Senior Pastor of Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church located in the city of Vallejo, California. Born in San Francisco, California in 1956 He is the fourth of six children, two girls and four boys.

His parents divorced when he was about five years old and his siblings went to live with their Grandparents, who also lived in San Francisco. The parting between his mother and father was not amicable and he was not a part of Wesley's life after that.

His mother remarried several years later and the new family moved into a house that summer. The man God brought into their lives, Bobbie Campbell, was one of the gentlest, yet toughest men Wesley had ever met. He was soft spoken, rarely would he raise his voice, but he got your attention when he did.

Originally from Louisiana, he chose to reside in California after his discharge from the United States Army. He believed in advancing in life through hard work, and consistently sought out opportunities to provide for his family, whether it be using furniture discarded by the local department store to furnish the kids rooms, or building a barbeque pit from discarded bricks.

He was taciturn in demeanor, sparse in praise, quick to point out what you missed or failed to do. His discipline took the form of work; “learn to do a good job and you won’t have to do it over again” was one of his favorite sayings.

Wesley would have to re-clean, re-mop, and re-dust his room until it met his father’s standard. He taught Wesley to really work — to accomplish a goal not for praise or reward, but to complete that which you have begun. Wesley no longer remembers him as stepfather, but as father: who taught Wesley to honor his commitments, accept responsibility for his actions, and strive to accomplish what he sets his mind to. Although Wesley resisted his teaching, guidance, and leadership style, as Wesley matured, he discovered the value of those precepts and examples when it came to raising his own children.

Wesley’s Grandmother greatly influenced in his life, and he would often spend hours helping her in the kitchen. She was a woman of calm demeanor and quiet dignity, who taught him the value of persistence. Each day she would wake at 4:30 am, ride a bus to the ferry terminal in downtown San Francisco, take the ferry to Marin County where she worked for a Jewish lawyer and his family as a housekeeper. After working for 8 hours, cleaning, cooking, doing the laundry, and other household tasks, she would then repeat the commute in reverse, coming home and cook and clean for her husband and her daughter's children. Wesley cannot remember her ever complaining about her lot or circumstance, but always ready with a smile, willing to listen with genuine interest and compassion. She was always ready with a smile and encouraging word, and truly believed that God would take care of every thing.

She was a constant source of understanding and encouragement that helped shape Wesley's understanding of God and of what is meant to perform ministry as an expression of God's love.

Wesley would characterize his mother as a "determined dreamer". She was raised a daughter of sharecroppers on a farm north of Pine Bluff, in a small community in Northwestern Arkansas. Even as a young girl, she showed a drive and determination that inspires him to this day. She often related to Wesley her experiences growing up and as a young girl, and how her determination to seek a better life for her and her children gave her strength at an early age.

As a child in the fifth grade, she could only attend school for a half the day, the remainder was spent carrying water for the sharecroppers who worked the cotton fields, and for this half-day's labor she was paid twenty-five cents. Even then, she dreamed of being a nurse. She never wavered from that dream, over the years receiving a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing, and later a Master of Psychology degree in psychology, culminating in her state certification as a Marriage and Family Therapist.

Wesley's mother was a woman of faith who insured that her children would be "raised in the admonition of the Lord". They were members of Double Rock Baptist Church in San Francisco, and were "church children"; participating in nearly every event and function at the church. The Easter play, Christmas play, the Mother's Day play, Father's Day speeches, the Youth Choir, Youth Usher board, and anywhere else that Wesley's mother thought her children would benefit from service to the Lord.

The church of Wesley's youth embraced a very traditional, fundamentalist theological posture. Women were not allowed to preach or even enter the chancel area

unless performing duties as a stewardess. The Pastor, who founded the church in 1958, oversaw every aspect of church operations, and was an accomplished organist as well. Wesley remembers church as a very disciplined place, where Sunday school led directly to the eleven a.m. worship service, and the ushers would not allow anyone to leave until after the benediction.

Being from an era before the popularity or availability of childcare again (professional or otherwise), Wesley went to church as soon as he could safely be exposed to the outdoor environment. Like most young children, he did not focus on the service, he preferred playing with the toys (two) that his mother would allow him to bring, but one thing was very clear; you had to be quiet! The church was a place for the worship of God and there was no tolerance for youthful outbursts or “making noise.”

As Wesley grew and became aware of the theological content of the weekly sermon, he discovered he honestly did not care for the God the pastor preached. The God he heard preached Sunday after Sunday was the God of the Old Testament—who was strict, vengeful, and jealous, God demonstrating his anger and displeasure at the people of God due to their sin and disobedience. It was remarked that after the preacher preached you could “smell the brimstone.” However, as Wesley matured in his faith he discovered that all fall short of the mark of the standard of Christ Jesus, “since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23 [NRSV])<sup>1</sup>

This is not to blame or criticize the pastor, but Wesley believes this narrow theological view contributed to his resultant dissatisfaction with the church, and eventual rejection of the religious community of his youth.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version*.

There seemed to be more emphasis placed on sin and judgment than God's acceptance of sinners through the sacrifice of Christ. Wesley also believes this view of God contributed to feelings of guilt, unworthiness, and inadequacy, feelings as a result of someone who was "saved" but always in conflict between the spiritual and carnal natures.

The staff of the Sunday school also shared this theological view, teaching lessons taken from the Old Testament, where God dealt directly with God's "chosen people" in a harsh and judgmental manner. Most remembered lessons in Sunday school were of God being a jealous God who would brook no infidelity, spiritual or otherwise, and was continually passing judgment on Creation. God did not look kindly upon sinners, sinners were going to hell, and everyone was a sinner. Hell was a very real place, a place reserved for sinners; a place of fire, of eternal torment, and this place was the destination of everyone who committed sin.

This message did not nurture his relationship with God, and Wesley became discouraged, believing his life did not resemble those he idolized in the Bible. He looked around at others who comprised the "body of Christ" at Double Rock Baptist Church, and his discouragement grew as the variance between the life God promised and lives that were lived outside the church grew. He observed his church and neighborhood came no closer to his idealistic concept of the principles and practice of the "righteous". Looking back however, it becomes clear his life and the lives of those at Double Rock actually did resemble the persons of the Bible. There were stories of faith, adversity, hope, and triumph interwoven within the lives of that community of faith. But at that time, Wesley did not possess the spiritual discernment needed to perceive the movement of God in the church.

Upon graduation from high school, he enlisted in the United States Army as a Radio Teletype operator, providing Combat Support communications. He served several overseas assignments in Korea, Germany, Guam, Hawaii, Alaska, and multiple locations within the continental United States.

He served with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Kentucky; earned the Air Assault qualification badge; qualified as an expert with various calibers of small arms, and served a tour with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division Honor Platoon during the 1977 NATO REFORGER joint combat field exercises in various locations throughout Europe.

Although Wesley did not attend church at this time, or share in any organized faith community, he still had what he believed to be personal communication with God. He was so convinced of the presence of God in his life that he would speak to God as if he were speaking to another person. Whenever faced with a challenge, whether personal or professional, he would ‘talk it over’ with God. The preferred mode of communication would be a conversation; some misunderstood and thought he was talking to himself. But Wesley found a honest and open expression with God allowed him to articulate his feelings, and gave him room to “sound out” what he felt and how that related to his understanding of the will of God for his life within creation.

Upon return from active duty, Wesley secured a position as a school bus driver in San Francisco. He still possessed faith in the existence of God, but shunned the organized religious community, not attending any church service. When he met Vivian, she eventually persuaded him to attend First African Methodist Episcopal Church of Oakland California.



He joined church that same day. While he does not remember the exact sermon title or text, he remembers the invitation: “God knows what you have done wrong God is not interested in your past; God is more concerned with your future.”<sup>2</sup>

He became a member of the Men’s Chorus, the Mass Choir, the transportation ministry, driving members to fellowship various churches, and volunteering in various aspects of church life and work. As he continued to seek ways to serve God, Wesley had a “nagging” feeling, a feeling that God was calling him, telling him, “prepare yourself”.

When Wesley answered his call to ministry it was with great fear and trepidation. He questioned the validity of the call, it’s accuracy, and it’s direction. Yet, under the direction of the senior pastor he was encouraged to begin ministerial studies. He began to prepare for ministry, a process that has spanned the last fifteen years of his life.

Wesley enrolled in the Certificate of Theology program at the Interdenominational Theological Center of Atlanta Georgia, completing the process in a distance-learning format. He then attended the Community College of the Air Force, receiving an Associate of Applied Science degree in Avionics Systems Technology; next, he completed and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Adult Education from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale Illinois.

Finally, he enrolled at the American Baptist Seminary (West) of Berkeley California, receiving a Masters of Divinity degree and recognized as the recipient of the L. Doward McBain preaching prize for the outstanding senior sermon. During this time, he was ordained an Itinerant Elder in the AME Church, and began working as the assistant to the Senior Pastor.

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<sup>2</sup> Preached by Reverend Doctor Frederick O. Murph at First AMEC, August 22, 1992.

It was during this time Wesley experienced what he considers real ministry, the work of ministry performed outside of the weekly worship service. His responsibilities included: visitations to those in Bay Area hospitals, to those under hospice care, counseling individuals by phone or in person at the church, or traveling to meet them where they were. There were no criteria for visitation, we went to whoever requested a visit whether a member or not.

Wesley supervised a ministerial staff of ten associate ministers, who in turn, were responsible for the various ministries of the church. The coordination of the Outreach Ministry, women's ministry, men's ministry, children's ministry, and other specialized ministries as the pastor saw fit, all were Wesley's daily responsibilities.

After serving as the assistant to the senior pastor for two years, Wesley was given the opportunity to pastor St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church (SPAMEC) in Vallejo California. He has pastored St. Paul for the past seven years. Wesley has found the opportunities and challenges of pastoral ministry to be the richest experiences of his ministerial career. He has discovered his gift for teaching the gospel, making the text "come alive" in the minds of the congregation, and for applying Scriptural truth to everyday life.

It is Wesley's earnest desire to model the "server/leader" performance model and to encourage others to lead by serving God through service to the faith community and the community at large.

St. Paul AME church is located on an acre lot in the Millersville district in the city. Located in a residential neighborhood, the church borders a rental property on one side, a larger Baptist Church across the street, and properties owned by that church on the remaining corners.

St. Paul is a Chapel styled church with the sanctuary that seats approximately 200 persons split between the main floor and the balcony. There is a small social hall to the rear of the sanctuary, with the pastor's office, and finance office on the balcony level. There is dark wine colored carpet throughout the church, sliding glass windows, and pews donated by a larger church over twenty years ago. There is a gravel parking area to the rear of the church, with a paved walkway into the social hall. The total membership is fifty-eight, but on given Sunday the attendance ranges between twenty to fifty persons.

The average attendance makeup is predominantly female between the ages of twenty to seventy-plus years old, with a young people's department that numbers from twenty to thirty children under eighteen. The adult male presence at St. Paul AMEC is an area of concern to this writer, with an average male attendance of less than five men per Sunday. The membership of the church is predominately comprised of one extended family whose matriarch desired that all would participate in, and support the work of, the church.

St. Paul AMEC, founded over sixty years ago, has witnessed the passing of the founding members and now is undergoing a leadership transition. The children of the founders, the immediate inheritors of the church legacy, are now in their latter years, and are not as active in the church as they once were, due to age, health issues, or familial commitments.

Consequently, the most active segment of the congregation now are the third generation (parents in their late twenties to mid thirties) and fourth generation (children aged three months to seventeen years), members who have either joined the church in the last seven years or resumed an active role in the life of the church under the current pastorate. They do not have extensive knowledge of the Connectional AME Church nor AME protocols, and since the denomination is connectional, and the members have had little to do with the 'connection' other than the biannual budgetary assessments, the congregation does not express an appreciation for the connectional relationship.

The congregation participates in the activities programs of the local church, but not as much in the events and activities at the connectional level as evidenced by low participation during such events as the District Conference, Annual Conference, or the General Conference. Young people between the ages of eighteen months and seventeen years old comprise approximately thirty percent of the worshipping congregation, and participate in church activities under the direction of the Youth Director.

The city of Vallejo was founded as California's first state capital in 1850 and named for one of the states preeminent native sons, a Mexican military officer, General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, on whose land much of the original city was built.<sup>3</sup> The man most responsible for the founding of the city is John B Frisby, who married Vallejo's daughter. He was responsible for helping to establish the city's government, supported the thriving wheat-shipping business, and founded the White Sulphur Springs Resort.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> City of Vallejo, *Vallejo History 2011* [www.ci.vallejo.ca.us/GovSite/default.asp?serviceID1=72](http://www.ci.vallejo.ca.us/GovSite/default.asp?serviceID1=72) (accessed July 21, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> City of Vallejo, *Vallejo History, 2011* (accessed July 21, 2012).

For one week in 1852, Vallejo was the capital of California, the first permanent home of California's state government. One year later, it was again the capital. This time, it lasted for one month. The legislature voted to move to Sacramento in 1853, but the government established a Naval shipyard in Vallejo, helping the town overcome the loss of the state government center.<sup>5</sup>

Established In 1854, The Mare Island Naval shipyard was the first United States Navy installation on the Pacific coast. The shipyard functioned for almost 150 years, undergoing vast transformations during its years of operation. In the 1920s, the Navy initiated construction of submarines at Mare Island Naval Facility. Immediately after Pearl Harbor and during War II Mare Island reached its peak capacity for shipbuilding, repair, and maintenance of the Pacific submarine fleet.<sup>6</sup>

Following the war Mare Island became the primary station for the construction, modification, and maintenance of Naval submarines. The base covered 5,200 acres and was responsible for the construction of over 500 naval vessels and overhauling thousands more.<sup>7</sup> As Mare Island grew into the largest ship construction facility in the world, Vallejo flourished as well, drawing thousands to move to the city. However, in 1993, the Department of Defense initiated the Base Realignment and Closure project, a program of operational realignments and force reductions and in 1996, ordered Mare Island

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

decommissioned and submarine maintenance operations were transferred to Naval bases in San Diego and Seattle.<sup>8</sup>

Just as Vallejo flourished during the peak years of Mare Island, the decommissioning of Mare Island dealt Vallejo a severe economic blow from which it is still in the process of recovery. The closure resulted in the loss of jobs on base, loss of businesses that provided services and support to the base, and the surrounding local economy. The current unemployment rate is approximately 11.7% as compared to a national average of 9.8%.<sup>9</sup>

In recent years, Vallejo has experienced a modern Renaissance and there are signs of commercial and cultural renewal, renovation, and redevelopment. Kaiser Permanente Medical Center is the largest private-sector employer with a full-time staff of over 3,900 employees. Vallejo is also home to Six Flags discovery Kingdom, a seasonal amusement park with a staff of 1,600. Vallejo is also home to several federal and state agencies, the United States forest service, United States Postal Service, and the United States Veterans Administration all have regional offices in Vallejo.<sup>10</sup>

Vallejo is also ethnically diverse, providing a rich variety of community life. In the years 1990 through 2009 the population of Vallejo increased 9% from 109,000 to over 123,000.<sup>11</sup> Vallejo is home to several institutions of higher learning. Touro University, which offers multiple graduate degree options in medicine, Solano

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> United States Department of Commerce, *State and County QuickFacts*. 2011 <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html> (accessed July 21, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Department of Commerce, *State and County QuickFacts 2011* (accessed July 21, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

community college, which offers two-year degrees and four-year college prep classes, recently built a satellite campus in the city.

The city of Vallejo has always considered religion to be one of the cornerstones that has held the community together. There is a rich diversity of faith traditions represented in Vallejo: Baptist, Catholic, Episcopalian, African Methodist, Church of God-In-Christ, and other non-denominational faith communities. Each recognizes the diversity and rich tradition of the others, and there are several ecumenical events and worship services each year.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE STATE-OF-THE-ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL**

This chapter is a review of the literature that has helped shape and informs this project. After collecting, reading, and analyzing the relevant information, this writer has included in this review a summation of the following titles. Since there is a leadership aspect to this ministry focus, the literature reviewed will also include material on leadership from a spiritual perspective.

An overview of the literature reviewed in this chapter will indicate that the writer is familiar with the theories and views concerning the preaching and teaching of biblical principles concerning spiritual gifts, their historic role in the early church, and their implications for the members of the local church, and has developed an understanding of the information required by the course on preaching and leadership. The writer has also included in this review works by some of history's foremost theologians, both ancient and modern, that has helped give form to a teachable model on spiritual gifts, servant-leadership, spiritual formation and the capacity for lay persons to positively impact the church and society.



Patricia Cranton, the author of *Professional Development as Transformative Learning*, purposes that the model of transformative learning developed by Drs. Mezirow and Brookfield, pioneers in adult learning theory, would prove useful in designing a program to change learners' perceptions of spiritual gifts in the post modern church. In the group study/training method, transformative learning is developed through continuous engagement in the critical thought process: examining assumptions, values, and perspectives. Using a combination of independent thinking, best practices of the past, yet being open to change in the interest of becoming better learners; the writer seeks to foster an acceptance of new interpretations of spiritual gifts.

The researcher concurs with this progressive model, where learners have ownership in the learning outcome, which aids in changing the church's perception of who has spiritual gifts, and how those gifts are put to use in the local church.

Stephen Rasor and Christine Chapman, authors of *Black Power from the Pew*, purpose to develop lay leadership through the theory of "congregational connectedness."<sup>1</sup> This concept seeks to provide an understanding of those connections the congregation has within itself, to other faith communities, and to the community at large. These connections in turn foster a sense of community and acceptance that encourages a supportive church atmosphere; where everyone is encouraged in discovering their spiritual gifts, and encouraged to use them.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Rasor and Christine Chapman, *Black Power from the Pew* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2007), 12.

The writer believes that this ‘connectedness’ is vital in maintaining unity within the congregation during times of change. This understanding is crucial in maintaining unity and a sense of common interest during the implementation phase of the project, and in creating a feeling of shared purpose and ownership in the projects goals.

Fritz Mutti, author of *Breath of Life*, purposes to approach leadership development from a synergistic viewpoint, advocating that a process of spiritual formation be integrated with leadership development to develop leaders who are also disciples of Jesus Christ.

Although his approach is directed primarily toward working with ordained clergy, the writer believes the principles of spiritual formation in conjunction with leadership development should not be limited to the pulpit. The writer believes that integrating spiritual disciplines with leadership development based on biblical texts will yield positive results within the laity as well.

Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, purposes that in order to realize the purpose of one’s life, one must go back to the God who created them and find the reason for their existence. He claims that unless one finds God’s reason for their existence, they will never be able to make sense out of their life.

Warren directs the reader through a 40-day spiritual transformative journey, which attempts to answer the question surrounding one’s purpose for existing on earth. This question resonates with the writer who believes that part of his life’s purpose is to develop a teaching model that helps believers discover their spiritual gifts, and encourages their use in the local church and community.

Although the program participants did not undergo the entire forty-day regimen, the idea that God actively desires members to seek God's purpose for their lives gave the project a practical focus.

Terry Thomas, author of *Becoming a Fruit Bearing Disciple*, purposes that in order to develop disciples capable of effective participation in the local church, intentional training is imperative. This training consists of knowing and understanding the implications of the Great Commission, the personal cost of discipleship, maintenance of discipleship, the heart of the disciple, and the joys of discipleship.

The goal of the training is to foster a process of growth through which members of the local church exhibit the change of character and personal growth that comes through being a disciple of Jesus Christ. This book was very useful in informing the stakeholders of what discipleship really means.

Samuel Proctor, author of *The Certain Sound of the Trumpet*, purposes that through effective sermon preparation, the message of the Jesus Christ can be proclaimed with greater efficacy. Although Proctor provides useful guidelines for the topic of sermon preparation, not much emphasis is placed on organization and structure; however, there were many literary devices that Proctor mentions that are helpful in sermon preparation.

One notable feature that Proctor emphasizes is the use of illustrations. This is a helpful tool for the researcher in the preparation of sermons, not only of this project, but also in developing a meaningful preaching ministry.

J. Oswald Sanders, author of *Spiritual Leadership*, purposes that leadership in the community of faith—true leadership is achieved by giving oneself in selfless service. He believes authentic spiritual leadership is more concerned with using

our gifts, talents, and abilities to the betterment of the human condition than self-aggrandizement. This served as one of the foundations for this project, calling the lay leadership of the local church to participate in the program not for just personal benefit, but to help the local church and its member grow.

David A. Ramey, author of *Empowering Leaders*, posits a quality-based model for leadership, using three “leadership quality commitments”. Where the quality of life, quality of work, and the quality of society are all interrelated in overlapping circles of influence.

The concept of ‘overlapping circles’ of influence serves to foster awareness of the believers impact not only in the life of the church, but in the social and professional organizations they are involved in, the social and educational structures their children engage in, and their homes and neighborhoods in which they live.

Joseph N. Torchia, author of *Creatio ex Nihilo*, examines the theology of St. Augustine and the development of the doctrine *creatio ex nihilo* (creation from nothing). This work has given the researcher insight into the creative nature of God, as revealed in the first chapter of the book of Genesis.

The author’s engagement with other voices in the evolution of the doctrine, as well examining the rationale behind it’s development, were instrumental in the preparation of the theological foundation of the project, the undergirding of the lessons on spiritual gifts as a reflection of God’s creativity in Creation, and of spiritual gifts as a form of spiritual creativity.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, author of *Creation and Fall*, purposes an examination of the various elements of creation can provide valuable insight into the theological implications for humanity's relationship with the God in creation. Of particular value in preparing this project is the section on the various creative acts of God that represent God's love and concern in the first seven days of creation.

This book was a valuable resource in articulating the personal dimension of God's activity, expressing God's loving desire and freewill affirmation of Creation. This is used to undergird the writer's assertion that spiritual gifts are also God's method of empowering humanity to partner with God in Kingdom building.

George Barna, author of *The Power of Team Leadership* theorizes that due to changing values in postmodern society, the team leadership can be a more effective approach to ministry in the small church. He notes that the majority of American churches have fewer than 100 adults attending on any given weekend. This, coupled with the fact that small churches generally have fewer than three clergy makes the concept of team leadership more important than ever if the church is to remain effective in the community. This concept was used to inform and encourage the congregation that small churches can be effective in ministry, helping to foster team leadership in the congregation.

D. A. Carson, author of *Showing the Spirit*, purposes that an exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 12 - 14 will provide valuable information in understanding the movement of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church, tracing the development of the advent of the Holy Spirit in early first-century church. The author traces Paul's argument of the unity of the body (the church) and the diversity of spiritual gifts.

Of particular interest to the writer is the underlying preposition contained in the text that gifts have been given to all who have received and believe in Christ. This text proved very useful in the biblical foundation of the project.

James H. Cone, author of *A Black Theology of Liberation* purposes that, through understanding God's liberating relationship with historically oppressed peoples, believers are empowered to pursue new understandings of God, and a deeper appreciation for God's self-revelation to humanity. Dr. Cone's writing on developing a theology of liberation centered in the black experience proved valuable in centering this project within the context of developing a hermeneutic to spiritually liberate members of the local church, encouraging each person to express their unique gifts.

His development toward a theology of liberation based on God's desire to free those oppressed by social, political, and economic forces aligns well with the practical theological view of this project, as well a theological view of liberation through the expression of spiritual gifts of the local church.

Don and Katie Fortune, authors of *Discovering your God-given Gifts*, purpose to establish an open and encouraging discussion of various types of gifts, which they classified into motivational gifts, manifestation gifts, and ministry gifts. This multiple categorization of gifts was of great benefit in expanding the definitions of spiritual gifts, which allowed the stakeholders in the local church a greater opportunity to identify their particular variety of spiritual gift(s).

Robert K. Greenleaf, author of *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, expounds on the nature of leadership through the lens of service to others.

What makes this work informative to this project is the authors' analysis of the concept and role of leaders as servants in various contexts—social, institutional, and religious—and how a proper understanding of one's leadership role can improve the organizational effectiveness where one serves.

N. Graham Standish, author of *Humble Leadership*, purposes that through an examination of his own pastoral journey he discovered the need to adopt a 'humble posture' in one's spiritual development, and to integrate this humility into the framework of pastoral ministry. The author posits that through an examination of leadership through five 'lenses'—humility, self-awareness, prayer, the need for Christian unity, and Holy Spirit-led guidance, it is possible to develop "humble leadership" which is crucial in attempting to implement a gifts-based ministry.

Lovett H. Weems, author of *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture, and Integrity* purposes that in order to develop an effective leadership in the post-modern church, four elements must be identified and in place in the church—a vision, a shared picture of a preferred future or outcome, a team-centered concept of ministry, where everyone contributes according to their gifts, culture, the shared language, symbols and rituals of the church, and the integrity, or congruency of vision and reality in the lives of the members, both clergy and laity. The writer believes these concepts hold great promise in further church development efforts.

Judith L. Kovacs has compiled writings of various Christian apologists into an anthology entitled *1 Corinthians: Interpretations by the Early Christian Commentators*, which purposes that through an examination of the commentaries of early Christian theologians, valuable insight can be gained into the relationship between the church at

Corinth, spiritual gifts, and their role in the early church. Based on the observations of Christian apologetics from the formative years of Christianity, theologians such as Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine help inform the writer of some of the issues concerning spiritual gifts in the early church. The writer feels that such in-depth analysis is of great help in ‘de-mystifying’ the concept of spiritual gifts, and the early church’s understanding of such gifts.

Theodore Walker, author of *Empower the People: Social Ethics for the African-American Church*, purposes that a socially responsible church must empower its congregation to advocate for the community beyond the church walls. This work was useful in defining what it means to empower a congregation through a hermeneutic of liberation based on the Exodus narrative linked to the book of Joshua.

According to Dr. Walker’s exegesis of the text, it is not enough for the church to work toward spiritual liberation, but the church is to also lead the struggle for comprehensive social empowerment for all people. This work was useful in expanding the concept of the local church’s role in working for change within the community.

Charlie Riggs, author of *Learning to Walk with God*, purposes a basic, understandable approach to Christian discipleship in a manner that members can grasp and apply in their own faith journey, which was of particular benefit to those who are young in their faith.

Through this book the stakeholders in the local church were guided in developing/strengthening a personal relationship with God, and establishing the disciplines of prayer, bible study, and applying the Scriptures to daily living. This is useful in the spiritual formation of the younger members of St. Paul.



While Howard Thurman's book, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman*, is not directly linked to the development of this project, this work was of great inspiration to the writer in not only the completion of this project, and of the Doctor of Ministry program as well. Dr. Thurman's persistence, determination, and 'higher vision' of God's purpose in his life encourages the writer not only in the pursuit of the learning degree, but to a renewed commitment to a ministry that is not afraid to 'follow the Master' in performing ministry that addresses the religious and social concerns of the members of the local church.

Cecil M. Roebeck, editor of *Charismatic Experiences in History* purposes to examine various aspects of the gifts of the Spirit through a collection of essays centered on the *charismata*, first foretold by the prophet Joel and realized at the Day of Pentecost, given through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Of particular usefulness to the stakeholders in the local church is the article by James D. G. Dunn, *Ministry and the Ministry: The Charismatic Renewal's Challenge to Traditional Ecclesiology*, in which the author posits any church that seeks to implement a gifts-based ministry must be willing to undertake a broader reinterpretation of the traditional roles of clergy and laity in the local church.

Ronald A. N. Kydd, author of *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church: An Exploration into the Gifts of the Spirit During the First Three Centuries of the Christian Church* purposes to examine the historical evidence of the church's response to the gifts of the Spirit in the early stages of Christianity, providing valuable insight in tracing the historical foundations upon which this project is built.

The church's response to the gifts of the Spirit during the early years of the church provided a useful frame of reference for members of the project in the local church to reflect on spiritual gifts from a historical perspective, and to create a meaningful dialogue concerning spiritual gifts in the local church today.

Mark J. Cartledge, author of *Encountering the Spirit: The Charismatic Tradition*, traces notable figures and development in the charismatic tradition from the early Church of the first and second centuries, and proceeds to provide significant background information on charismatic thought and doctrine of that period.

This work informs the historical foundation of this project, and provides a historically informed theological context. It was also useful in presenting a 'bridge' between the biblical corpus and extra-biblical thought and writing on spiritual gifts.

John T. Koenig, author of *Charismata: God's Gifts for God's People*, purposes to provide a biblical perspective on the charismatic phenomena in the New Testament church with special emphasis on the manifestation of the Holy Spirit to the faith community in Acts 2.

His careful analysis of texts provides an important distinction between the work of the Spirit and the movement of the Spirit, providing this project with a solid theology of spiritual and personal liberation of the local church through spiritual gifts to accomplish the church's evangelical mission.

Max Turner, author of *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now*, purposes to trace the development of pneumatology in the New Testament beginning with an examination of the spirit in the Old Testament.

He continues with an examination of the role of the Spirit in Judaism in the period between the Old and New Testaments, and the promise of the Spirit as recorded in the book of John. He also develops a biblical and systematic theology of the 'gift of the Spirit' useful to today believers. This work informs and assists the members of the local church to develop a holistic understanding of the gifts of the Spirit beyond established stereotypes.

Ken Hemphill, author of *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Discovering Your True Self Through Spiritual Gifts*, purposes to inform members of the local church in this project through an examination of who we are in Christ, and appropriating that knowledge to discover how God has gifted each person with a unique set of spiritual characteristics and how person's true potential is realized in the expression of those gifts. This knowledge serves to inform the members of the local church that they too have a role to play in God's redemptive plan for all humanity.

Walter A. McCray author of *The Black Presence in the Bible: Discovering the Black and African Identity of Biblical Persons and Nations*, purposes to examine the biblically identifiable African presence in the Old Testament, which facilitates self-identification of the stakeholders in the project with those figures of the Bible who allowed God to use them for the furtherance of the God's plan of redemption and liberation.

It is the writer's belief that members can be encouraged and undergirded in their relationship with God when they discover the persons, locales, and writers of the Scriptures were located in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa.

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, author of *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical And Global Perspective*, purposes to examine Ecclesiastical structures from a variety of perspectives. A particular interest to the writer is the examination of the Pentecostal/charismatic ecclesiology in the development of the Pentecostal/charismatic renewal movement, and its expression in the renewal ecclesiology and the shepherding movement. This work challenged the writer, an AME pastor, to be cautious in articulating a charismatic theological foundation for a gift-based ministry within the local church.

Ronald E. Ramsey, author of *Pastoral Leadership in the Black Church*, purposes to identify characteristics and traits necessary for effective leadership in an African-American church context. This work was useful to the writer as he sought to frame the spiritual gifts project within the context of the structure of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and with a view toward developing a practical theology of leadership that recognizes the importance of, and seeks to integrate gifts based ministry in the life and work of the local congregation.

Henry H. Mitchell, author of *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*, purposes to examine the role of viewing the Biblical text through the lens of life experience—insights designed to make the text ‘come alive’ in the minds of the listeners. This work was instrumental to the development of this writer's understanding of the hermeneutical and homiletical endeavor and the need to make the text understandable, relevant and meaningful the members of the local church.

Michael J. N. Dash and Christina D. Chapman, co-authors of *The Shape of Zion: Leadership and Life in Black Churches* purpose a study of the African-American church with an emphasis on the Methodist family of churches. The study provided much needed background information on the historical foundations of the AME Church, and gave the members of the local church a historical and modern reference for the local church's relationship to the connectional denominational body.

Richard J. Foster, author of *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of the Christian Faith* purposes to examine the historical development of the spiritual disciplines, work that proved valuable in the spiritual formation segment of this project. It provided the members of the local church with a guide to the development of the charismatic tradition, and insight into the need to be spiritually active beyond the worship experience.

He has also the author of *Celebration of Discipline*, which purposes that personal spiritual growth is possible through the practice of spiritual disciplines. This work served as the writer's guide to the theory, theology, and practice of the spiritual disciplines. The members of the local church were introduced to the inward disciplines, such as prayer and meditation, the outward disciplines, such as submission, and service to others, and the corporate disciplines of worship and celebration.

Gene C. Wilkes, author of *Jesus on Leadership: Discovering the Secrets of Servant Leadership*, purposes that through an examination of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, a program of spiritual development through the concept of 'servant-leadership' is possible, adopting the attitude of service to others as an expression of God's love and purpose for the church of all believers.

This was useful in challenging the members of the local church to risk truly adopting a servant posture as they seek to serve God through service in the church.

And finally, the *Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church* provides the doctrinal and denominational framework that shapes the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and consequently, the design and parameters of this project. Through a thorough examination of the authority, duties, and responsibilities of the various lay organizations of the local church, the stakeholders in the project are not only empowered to exercise their authority in providing lay leadership in the local church, but are also empowered to integrate their spiritual gifts in that service.

This informs the members of the local church of the AMEC's commitment to a vision of social, racial, spiritual and economic equality, and a practical theology of personal and economic empowerment, and their roles in continuing the legacy of the AME Church as a "reconciling and liberating people."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House, 2008), 5.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

The theoretical foundations of this project, a project based on Practical Theology done through a Black Theological perspective, are aligned with the objectives of the “Preaching and Leadership” peer focus group at the United Theological Seminary in Dayton Ohio. During the onset of United's doctoral program, the cohort mentors Dr. Ricky Woods (who was later replaced by Dr. Reginald Dawkins) and Dr. Terry Thomas introduced the focus group to the Church's critical need of preachers who not only seek to become better at the task of preaching in order to develop church leadership, but who also hope to foster leadership qualities in others for the building and edifying of the contemporary church.

This chapter has three goals. In a review of the “Biblical Foundations”, the First and Second Testaments will be discussed as they pertain to this ministry project. In addition to the biblical texts, the research will also include scholarly reviews on spiritual gifts that help equip the body of Christ for kingdom work both within and without the church. Next, the relevant the “Historical Foundations” will review the doctrine of *Charismata*, i.e. those “gifts” of the Spirit, including an overview of some key issues concerning charismata in the post-modern church.

The writer's final goal will examine the "Theological Foundations" of the project by exploring and setting forth a discussion of God as Creator: A Creator who creates from nothing (*ex nihilo*), continues the creative process within creation (*creatio continua*), to create the "Christ-like" life within believers (*imago dei*), which prepares believers for the *creatio nova*, God's new creation. Each of these aspects of Creation are relevant to this project, for if the stakeholders accept God as Creator, believe that God is continually involved with creation and humanity, and that God has a goal for creation as revealed in the Scriptures, they will be willing to participate in opportunities for spiritual formation and growth through the completion of this project.

### **Biblical Foundation**

An understanding of the doctrine of creation is crucial to the health and operation of the local church. The faith community accepts the Bible as the record of God in creation, and according to the *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, "The orientation of the biblical witness regarding creation is to the Creator, and thus the created world is conceived as being contingent. Though the Old Testament does attest something akin to an experience of creation, it does not allow us to move back from creation to the Creator. All that exists finds its true place and time only when seen against knowledge of the Creator."<sup>1</sup>

The record of God's presence and creative activity in regard to humanity and in nature serves as God's self-revelation, and speaks of God's involvement with humanity.

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<sup>1</sup> Fahlbusch, E., & Bromiley, G. W., *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*: Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 722.



However, a careful study of spiritual gifts and their role in the life of the church reveals that a mere awareness of being a part of God's creation is not sufficient. It is also important to understand that creation is an ongoing process, for as the apostle Paul declares to the believers at Philippi, "The one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> The culmination of God's creative and redemptive work is a reunification of all creation into a full relationship with God, as declared in the Revelation of Jesus Christ to John: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."<sup>3</sup>

This project, which focuses on how God formed creation out of nothing with a specific purpose in mind, a purpose that is still being worked out today, aligns itself with the following biblical passage: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God."<sup>4</sup> The local church and its members are also involved in

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<sup>2</sup> Phil. 1:6.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. 21:3-4.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 8:18-21.

the tension of the struggle to become more than they are, yet must wait on the movement of God to come to full fruition.

The writer believes that this area of struggle provides fertile ground for encouragement for stakeholders in this project to persevere if they desire to fully realize their God-given potential.

Jürgen Moltmann notes:

Creation in the beginning is therefore certainly open for salvation history; but salvation history, for its part, exists for the sake of the new creation. Consequently, even creation in the beginning already points beyond salvation history towards its own perfected completion in the kingdom of glory. In this respect history is not the framework of creation; creation is the framework of history. This sets limits to the 'historization of the world'. Creation is more than merely a stage for God's history with men and women. The goal of this history is the consummation of creation in its glorification.<sup>5</sup>

Moltmann also points out that according to the book of Genesis, creation is a Trinitarian process: God [Parent] creates through Jesus [Son] in the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup> He notes "the created world is therefore created 'by God', formed 'through God', and exists 'in God.'"<sup>7</sup> It is for the consummation of creation, the perfecting of the saints, and glorification of the God, that God gave creation gifts after God's own nature.

The assurance for the believer today is that God will not call on the church to do anything for which God has not already prepared the believers of that church to do.

No matter what the assignment God places on the church, God also places within that congregation the corresponding believers who are suitably gifted to accomplish the task.

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<sup>5</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 56.

<sup>6</sup> Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

In a letter to the churches of Asia Minor, Paul teaches, “ The gifts he [Christ] gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”<sup>8</sup> Responding to this directive, endeavoring to discover one’s ‘gift,’ and putting that gift to use in the body of Christ is the calling of every Christian.

For the objective of these gifts is to awaken and impel the believer to move beyond mere knowledge of God and into action for the Kingdom of God through the use of those gifts. But in order for this action to be spiritually sound and effective, the stakeholders in this project require a solid biblical and spiritual foundation upon which to build their faith in, and understanding of, God as Creator. This section will discuss the Biblical Foundations of this project, beginning with the Old, and then the New Testament.

The Genesis text provides an appropriate biblical foundation for the stakeholders in this project, because the project is aligned with the doctrine of creation, and the different aspects of creation. The aspects are: *creatio ex nihilo* (creation from nothing), *creatio continua* (continuous creation), and *creatio nova* (the new creation).

The project is undergirded by the understanding that all that we have is from God, our gifts are given by God, are given the increase through the Spirit of God, and God has a plan of Christian growth for all through the exercise of each person’s spiritual gifts.

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<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 4:11-13.

Creation from nothing is fundamental to the church's belief in a Creator. "The uniqueness of the Creator is that he has made the world out of nothing. This doctrine [*creatio ex nihilo*] reflects the fact that God has no counterpart (e.g., shapeless matter). He himself freely creates all that is distinct from himself."<sup>9</sup>

The stakeholders in the local church are involved with God by virtue of their very existence. It is through God's continuing involvement with humanity [*creatio continua*] through the Holy Spirit that brings everyone who believes into a relationship with God through salvation and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Jesus makes this promise to all who believe, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you."<sup>10</sup>

And finally, Christian belief and doctrine testify to the *parousia*, the second coming of Christ: "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."<sup>11</sup> This prophecy foretells the return of Christ, which will usher in the *creatio nova*, the 'new creation', also known as the "Kingdom of God."<sup>12</sup> Each of these aspects

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<sup>9</sup> E. Fahlbusch, and G. W. Bromiley, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity: Vol. 1*, 722.

<sup>10</sup> Jn. 14:15-17.

<sup>11</sup> Matt. 16:27-28.

<sup>12</sup> Matt. 6:33.

demonstrate God's commitment to creation and God's desire to redeem creation from separation caused by sin (for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God),<sup>13</sup> and God's plan to restore creation to a harmonious relationship with God that one day will be fulfilled with the second coming of Christ.

### Old Testament

The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings. Beginnings are a major theme in Genesis, and as such, provided a very pertinent starting point in developing the biblical foundation of this project, informing the project participants that God can create at any time, and in any place (such as the local church) regardless of what has gone before.

Genesis has been classified as a book of historical legends, a "quasi-mythical saga attempting to rationalize human existence in the face of a world that at times seems chaotic and confusing."<sup>14</sup> But there is more to the book of Genesis than an attempt to explain human existence. Terence Fretheim notes, "To claim that God created the world and all that exists is a matter of faith, grounded fundamentally in God's self-revelation. At this level the opening chapters of Genesis are a confession of faith."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Rom. 3:23.

<sup>14</sup> William Coats, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983), 7.

<sup>15</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, *Genesis in The Interpreter's Bible, Vol.1* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 337.

He substantiates this statement with this passage from the book of Hebrews, “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.”<sup>16</sup>

For the purposes of this project, this writer feels it would be counter-productive to dispute the veracity of the biblical account, either on the grounds of scientific accuracy or it’s historicity, for as Dietrich Bonhoeffer states “The Bible is nothing but the book upon which the church stands. This is its essential nature, or it is nothing.”<sup>17</sup>

Accepting the biblical narrative allows the members of St. Paul to learn biblical precepts and principles through the story of God’s creative action. The Genesis narrative is appropriate for the stakeholders in this project, for as a record of God’s action in creation, the lessons presented in the text demonstrate how God’s creative activity can aid the stakeholders of St. Paul, and all believers in developing their own understanding of not only God’s creative power, but their own as well.

For when the Bible declares “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...””<sup>18</sup> God blessed humanity with the power of creativity. Fretheim notes, “The command to be fruitful, to multiply, and to fill the earth immediately follows the word of blessing and involves a sharing of the divine creative capacities. God has brought the first human beings into existence, and the powers of propagating their own kind are now given over to the

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<sup>16</sup> Heb. 11:3.

<sup>17</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1959), 8.

<sup>18</sup> Gen. 1:27-28.

creatures.”<sup>19</sup> The power of human creativity beyond procreation has been demonstrated throughout history. Literature, art, music, and the sciences all testify to the God-given creativity of humanity, a creativity that is capable of great beauty, (as in the case of art, music, and literature), or great destruction (i.e. nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons).

Genesis in its present form is comprised of two major written sources, termed “J” and “P” (and the ‘minor’ source “E” or Elohist). The J source (from the German spelling, “Jahweh”), is the only source that uses the divine name of God, “Yahweh.”<sup>20</sup> Genesis 2 - 4, 15; Exodus 32; and Numbers 12 all reflect the style and tenor of this source, dated 10th century B.C.E.<sup>21</sup>

Most biblical scholars consider the creation account of Genesis 1 to have been written by the Priestly source, “P” and been has dated between the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E.<sup>22</sup> Donald Gowan points out: “The same style, vocabulary, and interests reappear in Genesis 1, 17; Exodus 6; and the whole book of Leviticus, to mention a few of its occurrences. This is the source called P, because of its strong “priestly” interests.”<sup>23</sup>

Fretheim also notes, “The material may have grown out of liturgical use and the regular round of the community’s praise of God the Creator. Worship interests also

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<sup>19</sup> Fretheim, *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, 346.

<sup>20</sup> Donald E. Gowan, *Genesis 1-11: From Eden to Babel* (Grand Rapids MI: Williams B. Eermands Publishing Co., 1988), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Gowan, *Genesis*, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 2.

clearly appear in the links among creation, tabernacle, and temple as well as in Sabbath and religious festivals.”<sup>24</sup>

The first chapter of Genesis chronicles God’s creative actions from the moment of God purposing creation, to its completion on the sixth day. In each day’s activity, God demonstrates God’s desire to provide, and insure the provision meets God’s standard (“and the Lord saw that it was good”).<sup>25</sup> God provides an environment conducive to human, animal, and plant life; God designs and implements a system of celestial orbital relationships where each body, whether it be moon, planet, or star is in perfect balance and harmony with other celestial bodies; and God performs continual quality assurance after each act of creation.

God begins the process with an acknowledgement of God’s will: “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth.”<sup>26</sup> Bonhoeffer underscores the importance of this beginning; “It [the Bible] begins with God’s free affirmation, free acknowledgement, a free revelation of God’s self.”<sup>27</sup> The Bible declares God purposed humanity before humanity was brought into existence, into relationship with God.

This liberates the stakeholders in this project from the need to ‘try to figure out’ why God creates: the Bible declares God creates *because it is God’s creative desire*. Bonhoeffer also points out: “Creator and creature cannot be said to have a relation of cause and effect, for between Creator and creature there is neither a law of motive nor a law of effect nor anything else. Between Creator and creature there is simply nothing: the

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<sup>24</sup> Fretheim, 341.

<sup>25</sup> Gen. 1:4; 1:10; 1:12.

<sup>26</sup> Gen. 1:1.

<sup>27</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Creation*, 14.



void. For freedom happens in and through the void. There is no necessity that can be shown in God, which can or must ensue in creation. There is nothing that causes him [God] to create.”<sup>28</sup>

We are the result of God’s freewill movement, which results in creation, a creation that was and is the expression of God’s desire for a meaningful relationship with that which God created. The stakeholders in this project can rejoice in knowing that God is involved because God desires to be involved.

Yet as God has purposed to create, God has chosen and now confronts the area chosen to receive God’s creative power. It is interesting to note that the place of God’s creation is an empty area; an area some theologians call “the void”: the place of absence, where ‘nothing’ exists. When God’s power goes forth, there will be an effect “so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”<sup>29</sup>

In the second verse, the Bible informs us “the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.”<sup>30</sup> Bohoeffter notes, “We call it the obedient void, the void that waits on God, the void whose glory and existence are neither in itself nor in its nothingness, but only in God’s action.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Isa. 55:11.

<sup>30</sup> Gen. 1:2.

<sup>31</sup> Bonhoeffer, 15.

The Rev. Dr. Terry Thomas, the writer's mentor and co-leader of the Preaching and Leadership cohort observes, "As God prepared to create, God's presence came "upon" the void; for us to hear God, God's presence must come upon us."<sup>32</sup> This observation speaks to the importance of spiritual formation in this project, cultivating the disciplines of prayer, fasting, and meditation upon the Scriptures that the Spirit of God might "come upon" believers. This also informs the writer and the members of St. Paul as they seek to become sensitive to God's presence coming upon them, and become responsive to the Spirit's guidance in recognizing and applying their gifts.

There is a consensus of theological thought in the doctrinal concept of the omnipresence of God, God who exists everywhere throughout the observable cosmos and beyond. But in order for creation to exist, some theologians, such as Jürgen Moltmann, posit that God must "create" a space for creation—a place where time and its passage affect its environment. He notes, "Kabbalistic interpreters surmise that this is why Genesis does not talk about the creation of space; for it is rather that creation is fashioned *in* the emptiness God ceded for it through his creative resolve. So the space of creation precedes both creation and the spaces fashioned within creation, yet without being identical to the uncreated, internal omnipresence of God."<sup>33</sup>

Being eternal, God is not subject to time, yet the Bible tells us in the "*beginning* God created."<sup>34</sup> The beginning of creation is not the beginning of God. Hence, beginnings can be related to the life of the Church, each believer in general, and St. Paul

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<sup>32</sup> Conversation with Dr. Terry Thomas, United Theological Seminary, August 21, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Moltmann, 156.

<sup>34</sup> Gen. 1:1

in particular, for the doctrine of God's omniscience means that just as God oversaw the beginning of all creation, God oversees all of our beginnings, and just as God saw that creation was good, God sees that everyone God creates is 'good.'

This is the 'good' place where Moltmann believes creation locates itself—"it exists in the space God yielded up for it through his creative resolve."<sup>35</sup> And because the local church can locate itself in the creation, in a place provided by God though God's will, there is reason for the members of the local church to hope that even if their visible resources are low, even if there are only a few members, or even if the church finds itself financially challenged, it can benefit from God's provision of 'space to exist.' It can also be said God also provides for space to exist for people also. In a society that systematically marginalizes a segment of its population, a population that has experienced the limitations placed upon them by slavery, by segregation, and by "Jim Crow" legislation, the AME Church, a church founded by freed slaves, can truly say, "God has made a way."

In the third verse, God speaks. Bonhoeffer points out the importance of God's Word in creation, noting, "the only continuity between God and his work is the Word, That is, 'in itself' there is no continuum; if the Word is not there, the world plunges into the bottomless abyss."<sup>36</sup> And Fretheim clarifies the importance of the God 'speaking': "God does not create by "word events" but by "word-deed" events." Hence, existing in the image of God means having a vocation that consists of both word and deed."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Moltmann, 157.

<sup>36</sup> Bonhoeffer, 20.

<sup>37</sup> Fretheim, 343.

This underscores the vital reality of the Word of God in creation, and this is important the AME Church, which, as a member of the Methodist family of churches, accepts the revealed word of God as authoritative over creation and substantive in creation.

The foundation for this project, and for the lives of all believers, is God's Word. Bonhoeffer makes this observation on God speaking: "'Word' means 'spoken word'—not 'symbol', 'meaning' or 'idea', but the concrete thing itself. That God, speaking, creates, means that the idea, the name, and the work are one in the created reality in God."<sup>38</sup> This is important to note for a community of faith, for their faith is founded on the Word they have received, and growth in trusting on the power of God's word. At each stage of the narrative, the story of God's creative activity can be appropriated and applied the work and life of the members of St. Paul.

God the spoke creation into existence; "And God said "Let there be light," and there was light."<sup>39</sup> God speaks, creation responds to the word of God, and there is light. This passage informs the stakeholders of this project, for when members of St. Paul search for meaning in their work and worship, for there is comfort in knowing that as God provided light through God's word in the beginning, before manifesting the physical environment we know as creation, God provided Christ as a light for *their* beginning. The light brings an awareness to the created of what God has created, and as Bonhoeffer notes "The light must create form. As the formless night becomes form by the light of morning,

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<sup>38</sup> Bonhoeffer, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Gen. 1:3.

as the light creates and unveils form, so that primeval light had to order the chaos, create and unveil form.”<sup>40</sup>

The light reveals what God creates, and through Christ, who says “I am the light of the world,”<sup>41</sup> we are revealed to be who God created us to be. As Terence Fretheim points out, “Inasmuch as the sun had not yet been created, this verse probably refers to a divine manipulation of light as a creative act.”<sup>42</sup> In this project, the members of the local church learned that when God created them, *it was just as divine an act as original creation.*

Light proves to be crucial in the realization of creation, as Bonhoeffer notes, “Transparency, distinctiveness, and unburdened state of actual being, contributed by light, in its confrontation with the other created forms and with the Creator, is the work of the first Word of the Creator. In his created light the creation sees his light.”<sup>43</sup> God sees what the light reveals and pronounces it “good.”

Concerning the ‘day,’ Bonhoeffer notes “When the Bible speaks of six days of creation it may well have been thinking of the day of morning and evening, but in any case it does not mean this day in a computable sense; it thinks of it in terms of the power of the day which first makes the physical day what it really is, the natural dialectic of creation.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Bonhoeffer, 21.

<sup>41</sup> Jn. 8:12.

<sup>42</sup> Fretheim, 343.

<sup>43</sup> Bonhoeffer, 21.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 25.

He also points out “The days God created are the rhythms in which the creation rests.”<sup>45</sup> The alternating cycles of light and dark that create a pattern between activity and rest that allow creation to ‘catch its breath,’ an admonishment the members of St. Paul (the writer included) would do well to heed for spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical health.

The next ‘day’, God delineates the parameters of the creation, “And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.”<sup>46</sup>

The separation of “water from water” creates the sky, or in Hebrew, *shāmayim*, the physical “heavens.”<sup>47</sup> Here again, the provision of ‘space’ is given, a place to sustain the humans and creatures to come. God continues to order creation into an environment conducive to human life.

The atmosphere is created to sustain and nurture life, and all believers are encouraged to remember that God’s intent in creation affirms life, and the conditions to necessary to nurture life. The narrative continues to speak of God’s creative activity, as God continues the creative process: “And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Gen. 1:6-8.

<sup>47</sup> Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Volume 2. (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 935.

And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.”<sup>48</sup>

It is worth noting that now as the process of separation continues, the earth from the sea, and the collecting of the seas to reveal the land, the earth is now involved in the process of creation, bringing forth fruit and vegetation, which Gowan notes, “indicating that “P” thought of the earth’s vegetation as a part of God’s provision of space in which the land animals will live.”<sup>49</sup>

This observation serves to integrate an ecological perspective into the project, to underscore the fact that creation is an intertwined, interdependent ecosystem of which we all are a part. This will become evident on the sixth day, as God gives ‘final instructions’ to the pinnacle of creation, humanity.

As God continues ordering creation, “God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the

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<sup>48</sup> Gen. 1:9-13.

<sup>49</sup> Gowan, 24.

light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.<sup>50</sup>

The text reveals that the sun and moon are created three days after creation has begun. Gowan explains: “It is generally agreed that the sun and moon do not make their appearance until the fourth day for polemic reasons. The heavenly bodies were worshipped in every religion but that of Israel, and the sun, moon, and Venus were very often major deities in the pantheon, For P [the priestly writer] they are certainly not deities, nor are they even essential for the existence of the habitable world—a position likely to be taken only when one is fighting against extravagant claims for those luminaries.”<sup>51</sup>

The importance of the celestial bodies is now in marking time, the passage of night and day, and as Gowan also points out “In P’s structuring of creation, time began with the creation of light on day one, space for life was provided on days two and three, a time-keeping began in the middle of the week.”<sup>52</sup> It is significant to note the Hebrew word for “seasons” is *moadah*, which refers not to the natural seasons, spring, summer, fall, or winter, but to the “festal assemblies,” or “fixed festivals.”<sup>53</sup> The writer of the first chapter Genesis insures that worship will focus on the Creator and not the creation. This focus on the Creator and not the things of this world is a benefit in spiritual formation by

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<sup>50</sup> Gen. 1:14-19.

<sup>51</sup> Gowan, 25.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> *Strong's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 63.



developing a regular, consistent spiritual regimen of prayer, study, and worship focused on the Creator and not our assets or possessions.

The fifth day God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.”<sup>54</sup>

As God continues to populate the earth, other life forms are now to share the space for living provided by God. Gowan makes this interesting observation “Animate beings receive a blessing, unlike anything previously created, and the content of the blessing is the ability to reproduce themselves—that is, the ability for an individual to pass on life directly to another being like itself.”<sup>55</sup> This observation should give cause for reflection upon humanity’s role in creation in relation to other forms of life, for as Gowan notes, “we ought to contemplate this significant element that we have in common with the birds and the fish; in the sight of God. They also are honored by him, as he bestows upon them a blessing.”<sup>56</sup>

The final day of creation is truly in the manner of a finale of a grand symphony of creation—the sun and other stars are in place, the air smells of new—new grass, trees, mountains, rivers, birds, animals all poised for God’s next creative action:

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<sup>54</sup> Gen. 1:20-23.

<sup>55</sup> Gowan, 26.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

Then God said, Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. God said, See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food. And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.<sup>57</sup>

This passage of Scripture is rich with meaning for the members of this project.

Humanity is made in the image of God. The Hebrew word used for image is *sālm*, which meaning covers the concepts of form, image, and likeness. The *New Bible Dictionary* notes, “The image was not primarily intended as a visual representation of the deity, but as a dwelling-place of the spirit of the deity enabling the god to be physically present in many different places simultaneously.”<sup>58</sup> If the creature is now a dwelling-place for the Spirit of God, might not the creature share some divine characteristics of the Creator?

Leon Kass offers an interesting analysis of how humanity might share in the nature of God, stating, “In the course of recounting His creation, Genesis 1 introduces us to God’s activities and powers: (1) God speaks, commands, names, blesses, and hollows; (2) God makes, and makes freely; (3) God looks at and beholds the world; (4) God is concerned with the goodness or perfection of things; (5) God addresses solicitously other living creatures and provides for their sustenance.

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<sup>57</sup>Gen. 1:26-31.

<sup>58</sup>D. R. W. Wood and I. H. Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 499.

In short: God exercises speech and reason, freedom in doing and making, and the powers of contemplation, judgment, and care.”<sup>59</sup>

In response to these observations from the Genesis text, he compares human abilities: “Human beings, alone among the creatures, speak, plan, create, contemplate, and judge. Human beings alone among the creatures can articulate a future goal and use that articulation to guide them in bringing it into being by their own purposive conduct. Human beings, alone among all the creatures, can think about the whole, marvel at its many-splendored forms and articulated order, wonder about its beginning, and feel awe in beholding its grandeur and in pondering the mystery of its source.”<sup>60</sup>

This comparison illustrates that humans, who were created in the image and likeness of the Creator, who are able to alter their environment to suit their own desires, who have investigated the mysteries of the atom, and now have the capacity to examine their very own genetic structure, certainly reflect the capabilities of the Creator. This is not to say we have the same powers and abilities, but the passage indicates we reflect the wonderful God who created us.

Not only does God create our physical environment, separate the various elements in harmonious balance, and provides for each, God also enlists those in creation to partner with God in exercising stewardship over and in creation. The writer of this project offers to interpret this stewardship as a form of ‘spiritual leadership’—spiritual, because the created senses and follows the Creator through the Creator’s Spirit, and leadership in

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<sup>59</sup> Leon Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003), 38.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

the sense of the one performing the task serves as an example that other may emulate (lead) those Spirit-led and creation-serving behaviors.

One of the first examples of spiritual leadership, based upon obedience to the sovereignty of God, is in Genesis. The Bible records “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it”<sup>61</sup>. Although God created Eden, God gave Adam the responsibility for its care. The commission for this responsibility is also found in Genesis: “God blessed them, and God said to them, “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”<sup>62</sup>

When God gave this directive to Adam, God made Adam a steward of creation. Stewardship by definition is administration of duties or goods in one's care. For example, a person who administers a household is a steward or overseer, for they do not own what as been entrusted to them but care for those assets according to the desires of the owner. In Genesis, God “took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.”<sup>63</sup>

How did Adam gain the necessary knowledge and skill to carry out God's instructions? He received it from God. In order to accomplish this ‘tilling’ and ‘keeping’, Adam needed to know how to prepare the land for cultivation (tilling), what plants needed in order to thrive, and what conditions were detrimental to that growth, and so forth. The writer submits that Adam received that knowledge from God, knowledge that was freely given by God to accomplish God's will, and by definition, what is freely given

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<sup>61</sup> Gen. 2:15.

<sup>62</sup> Gen. 1:28.

<sup>63</sup> Gen. 2:15.

is called a ‘gift.’ In the realm of spiritual leadership, once we understand God’s partnership with humanity, the various gifts given to believers through the Holy Spirit, and the unique nature of each individual’s gift, the use of those gifts will benefit not only the individual, but also the congregation, and the community at large.

It is also helpful to note the manner in which First Testament writer regarded the connection between the spiritual and the natural in order to appreciate the full breadth of this discussion. John Koenig notes how much their view differs from ours today:

The ancient Hebrews never separated the physical from the spiritual. What we call commonplace and ordinary (the growing of grass!) for them was holy, ‘charged with the grandeur of God.’ This does not mean that the Hebrews were pantheists who identified God with the processes of nature. Far from it! Yet precisely because the First Testament writers had discovered God’s saving mercy and responded to it in obedience, they found their vision enlarged to comprehend the cosmic extent of his power. It was their God who held the whole world in his hand; the very air glowed with his presence. First Testament writers did not trouble themselves with what we twentieth-century folk experience as a split between the material (or “scientific”) and the supernatural. For them, there were no natural processes, no features of creation cut off from God’s sustaining and renewing Spirit.<sup>64</sup>

This reasoning is aligned with the doctrinal belief that God is omniscient, and as such, God is the possessor of all knowledge. It follows that God must impart to Adam the “know-how” to carry out God’s instructions. This is only the beginning of God’s partnering with humanity, endowing, and empowering the created to accomplish the will of God.

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<sup>64</sup> John Koenig, *Charismata: God’s Gifts for God’s People* (Philadelphia PA: Westminster Press, 1978), 24.

In the 139<sup>th</sup> Psalm, David acknowledges he was “knit together in my mother’s womb”<sup>65</sup> (v. 13), and he is “fearfully and wonderfully made (v. 14).”<sup>66</sup>

This points to the notion that God has taken the time to put each part of each human together, individual by individual. Some commentators consider verse thirteen, where David says God wove him together, to refer to his veins and arteries: “For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.”<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, it could be argued that David, a gifted warrior, musician, and king who held the ancient viewpoint that synergized the natural and spiritual, would never have merely limited his praise for God's handiwork to the crafting his physical being.

Instead, David, who knew God from his days as shepherd, knew “That the Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear,”<sup>68</sup> had endowed him with so much giftedness to do mighty works for the Lord, could understand better than anyone that something unique and supernatural, beyond veins and arteries, had been placed inside him, giving him the ability to accomplish great things for God. Perhaps he was not able to call them by the names we know them as today; nevertheless, and more importantly, he was able to put them into use in carrying out God's will in the world.

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<sup>65</sup> Ps. 139:13.

<sup>66</sup> Ps. 139:14.

<sup>67</sup> Ps. 139:14.

<sup>68</sup> 1 Sam. 17:37.

The vividness with which the psalmist describes this process stating that we were knit by God's own hand indicates that we are custom designed, handmade originals. There is nothing prefabricated or 'cookie-cutter' about God's creation. Instead we are each designed with specific gifts and abilities for specific purposes in creation.

Not only does God endow or 'craft' individuals with certain abilities, he also creates within them the ability to do crafts themselves, as seen in this passage from the book of Exodus:

The Lord spoke to Moses: see, I have called my name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft. Moreover, I have appointed with him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have given skill to all the skillful, so that they may make all that I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, and the ark of the covenant, and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin with its stand, and the finely worked vestments, the holy vestments for the priest Aaron and vestments for his sons, for their services as priests, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the holy Place. They shall do just as I have commanded you.<sup>69</sup>

This passage presents yet another way in which God shows God's creativity in action. Bezalel and Oholiab use their creative powers, given to them by God, in the service of the divine and the community. They also work with the community when crafting the work. Particular members of the community participate in the creative act as assistants,<sup>70</sup> but all members of the community are able to contribute by donating some of their substance and supplies.

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<sup>69</sup> Ex. 31:1-31.

<sup>70</sup> Ex. 36:2.

The contributions come in such abundance that the people must be ordered to cease.<sup>71</sup> The artists received creative input, affirmation, aid, supplies, and material support in exchange for their creative work. The story of the two artists who were inspired by God appears to be a valuable model upon which Black Theology could further examine the role of creativity in expressing a theology of liberation, as told in the Exodus narrative.

Bezalel and Oholiab also exemplify the wealth of creative power and ability contained within the Spirit of God. In Moses' instruction to the Israelites, the extent of Bezalel's spiritual giftedness is revealed: "See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel son Uri son Hur, of the tribe Judah; he has filled him with divine spirit, with skill, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft."<sup>72</sup>

We can discern in this passage the arts of design, jewelry, metal artistry, carpentry, and in addition to this plethora of charismatic gifting, he and Oholiab are given the gift of teaching!<sup>73</sup> And although God, through the Holy Spirit, has imparted to Bezalel and Oholiab the special ability to build the tabernacle to glorify God, they were not the only ones used in the building effort.

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<sup>71</sup> Ex. 36:5-6.

<sup>72</sup> Ex. 35:30-34.

<sup>73</sup> Ex. 35:34.



Exodus 36:1 informs us: “Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful one to whom the Lord had given skill and understanding to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all the Lord has commanded.”<sup>74</sup>

The passage reveals that God endows not only skill in performing a task, the understanding of the creative process that brings the vision to reality, but also God works within and upon the community of faith to accomplish the task. Although some may question whether these are legitimate spiritual gifts, Warren Wiersbe offers this insight:

Whenever God calls us to do a job for Him, He gives us the enablement we need and the helpers we need, this He did for Bezalel and Oholiab. Bezalel means “in God’s protection;” his father Hur we have met before (Exodus 17:10-16; 24:14). God gave these men the ability they needed to follow the heavenly pattern and make the things necessary for the tabernacle. Their wisdom and skill came from the Lord, and they used their abilities in obedience to God’s command. Artistic skills can be dedicated to God and used for His glory, not everybody is called to be a preacher, teacher, or missionary. There is also a need for Christian writers, artists, musicians, architects, doctors, gardeners – in fact, in every legitimate vocation we can serve the Lord.<sup>75</sup>

This insight is useful in expanding the definition and scope of the gifts of the Spirit, allowing the stakeholders to re-envision and re-interpret their own spiritual giftedness in broader terms, allowing everyone to discover their own gifts.

The Old Testament contains other notable instances where God endowed selected individuals with talents, insights, and abilities that were used to accomplish deeds that advanced the goal of God’s redemptive desire for humanity, and made known God’s presence and sovereignty in creation.

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<sup>74</sup> Ex. 36:1.

<sup>75</sup> W. W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines of the Old Testament* (Wheaton IL: Victor Books, 1993) 271.

John Koenig refers to such notable biblical figures as ‘charismatics’, those whom the manifestation of the gift of God's Spirit set them apart from the rest of Israel to be used by God. He notes “Israel as a nation, received gifts of election from God. But we also learn of individuals within Israel whom God singled out as special recipients of his spirit. Persons such as Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, and Daniel were all chosen by God, and given the Holy Spirit to fulfill special roles or to carry out particular tasks.”<sup>76</sup>

He also notes the Spirit of God came upon individuals temporarily or for a specific task in a time of need. Such was the case of the Judges of Israel, such as Samson, who was given great strength to resist Philistine oppression, or Ehud, whom “the Lord raised up” to resist the oppression of the King of Moab.<sup>77</sup>

It could be argued Ehud was “gifted” to be left-handed in order to assassinate the king of Moab, for his ‘left-handedness’ allowed him to smuggle a weapon into the inner chamber and assassinate King Eglon,<sup>78</sup>

There were others who did not receive a direct indwelling of the Spirit, yet were indirectly gifted by someone who did. Such was the case of the seventy elders, who received “some” of the Spirit which was “on” Moses and prophesied along with Moses<sup>79</sup>, carrying out God’s instruction that “they shall bear the burden of the people along with you so that you will not bear it all by yourself.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Koenig, *Charismata*, 29.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>78</sup> Judg. 3:21-22.

<sup>79</sup> Num. 11:24-25.

<sup>80</sup> Num. 11:17.

The Bible records that the seventy elders prophesied upon receiving the spirit, and after doing so, “they did not do so again.”<sup>81</sup> The Spirit dwelt upon them only for a specific purpose, and once that purpose was accomplished, they returned to ‘ordinary’ life.

However, the Bible also records charismatic men and women on or in whom dwelt the Spirit of God and how the Spirit affected their personal and professional lives. It is also important to note the distinction of God “being with” someone, as in the cases of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,<sup>82</sup> and the Spirit “being upon” someone, such as Joseph, who, under the guidance of the Spirit, interpreted Pharaoh’s dream so accurately that even Pharaoh, a pantheist, recognizes the Spirit of God in Joseph.<sup>83</sup>

We find in the Exodus narrative when God made God’s Presence known to Moses for the work of liberating the Hebrew people from Egyptian servitude, God endowed Moses with God’s own creative power, saying: “when you go back to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put in your power...”<sup>84</sup> At the end of Moses’ prophetic career, the Bible records that he himself transmitted the “spirit of wisdom” to Joshua by the laying on of his hands.<sup>85</sup> Moses is understood as not the originator of this spirit, but the vessel through whom the spirit came. As God continues the process of God’s self-disclosure to humanity, the Holy Spirit was and is instrumental in accomplishing that disclosure.

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<sup>81</sup> Num. 11:25.

<sup>82</sup> Although God does not specifically say “I will go with you”, God presence is implied in Gen. 12:2. Also, the promises given to Abraham are renewed in the lives of Isaac (Gen. 26:3), and Jacob (Gen. 28:13-14).

<sup>83</sup> Gen. 41:38.

<sup>84</sup> Ex. 4:21.

<sup>85</sup> Deut. 34:9.

The prophets are prime examples of the Holy Spirit's intervention to proclaim the will of God. The book of the prophet Nehemiah records the prophet Ezra reading God's word to the people which contained these words: "Many years you were patient with them [the people], and warned them by your spirit through your prophets; yet they would not listen."<sup>86</sup> The prophet Zechariah declares "They made their hearts adamant in order not to hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets."<sup>87</sup> Even though the Holy Spirit is moving and influencing the prophet, the people who receive the word of God have the freedom to accept or reject God's word. However, even if one rejects the word, the Spirit has accomplished the work of transmitting God's instruction and desire to humankind.

## **New Testament**

For those who accept the word of the salvation, the Spirit of God is assured to be involved in their spiritual and physical lives. In the book of John, Jesus makes a promise to his disciples; all those who choose to follow his teaching: "If you love me, you will do my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be you."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Neh. 9:30.

<sup>87</sup> Zech. 7:12.

<sup>88</sup> Jn. 14:15-16.

After his crucifixion, Jesus ordered the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the ‘promise of the Father.’<sup>89</sup> Upon arriving at Jerusalem, the apostles, and disciples waited in the upper room of the house, spending their time in prayer and meditation upon God’s word.<sup>90</sup> At the appointed time, the day of what would be known as Pentecost, the God manifested God’s Spirit in a completely new way. After the ‘outpouring’ of the Holy Spirit, ordinary men and women, (laity) received the ability to perform a new type of ministry. This new form of ministry would be performed by those who are called from all walks of life, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim salvation in the name of Jesus,<sup>91</sup> and be used to carry out the work of ministry in the world. Ministry would no longer be confined to the temple, performed by the priesthood, or the prophets, those trained in religious ministry.

The second chapter of the book of Acts testifies to the new work of the Holy Spirit in endowing humanity with the ability to participate in God’s creation through spiritually creative activity: “And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Acts 1:13-14.

<sup>91</sup> Rom. 10:9.

<sup>92</sup> Acts 2:2-4.

<sup>92</sup> Acts 4:13.

This passage reveals that now the proclamation of God's "God's deeds of power,"<sup>93</sup> God's redemptive desire, and God's restorative plan for creation would be expressed through ordinary men, women, boys and girls, empowered by the Holy Spirit as the motive force in the redemption of all creation. This work is now being carried out in a new community, a community not based on lineage, social position, or tribal affiliation, but on the shared experience of 'meeting Jesus', and in the acceptance of their shared salvation.

The apostle Peter is a prime example of this new paradigm. Unlearned in the ways of the priesthood, temple, or Torah, Peter (who was recognized as 'unlearned and ordinary' by priests and Sadducees),<sup>94</sup> became the spokesperson for the new religious movement and its community. Acts 2:14-18 informs us:

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.<sup>95</sup>

One of the reasons this passage is important to the stakeholders of this project is that it not only marks the fulfillment the prophecy contained in Joel 2:28, 29, it is the revelation of God to the human family that God desires communion with humanity through God's Spirit.

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<sup>93</sup> Acts 2:11.

<sup>95</sup> Acts 2:14-18.

This passage serves notice to all humankind that the manifestation of spiritual gifts will be dispersed among the new faith community, gifts given to the entire ‘body’ of believers through the Spirit of God to bring the faith community, the believers to spiritual maturity.

Began with the proclamation of God’s “deeds of power”<sup>96</sup> by those apostles and disciples who had followed Jesus’ injunction to “not to leave Jerusalem but to wait there for the promise of the Father,”<sup>97</sup> now believers whose only qualification is faith and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit would form the basis of ministry the new faith community.

Following the manifestation of the Holy Spirit among the assembled believers, those gathered in the upper room went outside *en masse* and spoke languages that were not their native tongue. The Bible records that “Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia. Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Libya, belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.”<sup>98</sup>

This passage serves to inform the members of the local church that God can endow believers with the ability to proclaim the glory of God in new and innovative ways through the Spirit of God, and is not dependent on their knowledge, talent, or self-estimation of their ability.

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<sup>96</sup> Acts 2:11.

<sup>97</sup> Acts 1:4.

<sup>98</sup> Acts 2:9-11.

The New Testament text used in this project as a reference point for spiritual gifts is the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Corinthians. Although the original city of Corinth was destroyed by L. Mummius in 146 B.C.E., it was rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C.E. and re-named *Julia Corinthus* in honor of the goddess Venus and the Emperor.<sup>99</sup> Located on isthmus between the Corinthian Gulf and the Saronic Gulf, the city gained importance as hub of commercial and religious activity.<sup>100</sup>

The inhabitants of Corinth—a mix of Jews, philosophers, sailors, ex-soldiers, travelers and shippers of goods who did commerce in the region also brought with them many different religious traditions and customs.<sup>101</sup> This plethora of religious diversity was so entrenched in the local culture that modern archeologists have found evidence of more than two-dozen temples, altars, and shrines.<sup>102</sup>

The church founded in Corinth was representative of this diversity. The congregation reflected the disparate social strata typical of Roman culture—few Corinthians were rich, the majority were not.<sup>103</sup>

The congregation at Corinth was also affected by the mores of Roman culture—there were issues of sexual immorality, marriage, the proper role of foods sacrificed to idols, and the role of women in worship among other issues.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *The Pulpit Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc. 2004), i.

<sup>100</sup> *The Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume 10* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 773.

<sup>101</sup> *The Interpreter's Bible, Volume 10*, 774.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 777.

<sup>104</sup> 1 Cor. 5:1-7:40; 8:1-11:1; 11:2-18.



As to the society at large, *The Pulpit Commentary* notes, “The worst moral sins of the city were dishonesty, drunkenness, and above all, sensuality, which was directly due to the worship of Aphrodite Pandemos, and to the thousand female *hieroduli*, (temple attendants) who were consecrated to her service.”<sup>105</sup> Another issue that concerned the church at Corinth, and is crucial to this project, is the Corinthians’ lack knowledge of gifts of the Spirit, to effectively utilize the gifts of the Spirit among their faith community. Paul uses this lack of knowledge as a starting point to not only teach the Corinthians about the nature and source of spiritual gifts, he goes on to emphasize service over status, and the community (“the common good”) over individual achievement or status.<sup>106</sup>

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 presents an excellent starting point for the participants in this project to begin a dialogue concerning spiritual gifts. In the local church of the post-modern era, individuals from many different religious and economic backgrounds find themselves seeking not only God’s direction and purpose for their lives, but also how to discern their role in building God’s Kingdom. The stakeholders in the local church also are seeking God’s will for their lives in the face of culture of individualism and are encouraged to know they all share of gift of God’s presence and purpose in the present day church.

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<sup>105</sup> H. D. M Spence-Jones, *The Pulpit Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2004), ii.

<sup>106</sup> 1 Cor. 12:6-7.

The seminal passage that informs this project is 1 Cor. 12:4-11:

Now there are varieties of gifts, But the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good. To one is given through the spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another be interpretation of tongues. All of these are activated by the one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the spirit chooses.<sup>107</sup>

This passage serves to remind the Corinthians that God is not only the source of all gifts, but all gifts are given through the Spirit of God. John Chrysostom writes, “They had spiritual gifts, some lesser, some greater. But the spiritual gift of tongues was preeminent. These gifts, however, led to division, not because of the nature of the gifts themselves but because of the folly of those who receive them. Those who receive the greater gift exalted themselves above those with lesser ones. The latter, for their part, were upset and envious of those with the greater gifts. Paul explains this later in the letter. Since the situation caused serious injury, namely, the dissolution of their love, Paul takes great pains to correct it...”<sup>108</sup> Their focus on the social status their gifts afforded them in the faith community caused greater fracturing among a congregation already divided by Roman social stratification.

To rectify this situation, Paul weaves a theme of unity into this letter. He begins by pointing out that it is the one God who through the Spirit, is the power, authority and

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<sup>107</sup> 1 Cor. 12:4-11.

<sup>108</sup> J. Kovacs, ed. *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 196.

giver of all spiritual gifts (*charisma*), there are different ways to serve the body of Christ (*diakonia*), but whatever form service to other takes, it is still empowered by Lord, there are diverse ways to express your capabilities (*energēma*), but all capabilities are activated in the life of each believer by the Spirit of God.<sup>109</sup> J. Brady points out, “For Paul, it is astonishing that what is a gift from the Spirit and, furthermore, a gift that is allocated as the Spirit chooses, could become a basis for boasting. Therefore, while recognizing the diverse allocation of gifts, Paul’s opening points in vv. 4 – 11 are that (1) whatever gifts one has are not given to vaunt oneself but are designed to serve the common good of the community, and that (2) “one and the same Spirit” has allocated the gifts strictly as it pleased the Spirit.”<sup>110</sup>

D. A. Carson also notes the diversity of spiritual gifts noting, “What is clear from this sequence is that Paul is not concerned to define ‘spiritual gift’ too narrowly. We have already noted the considerable range of *charismata*. The two parallel terms are if anything even broader. The “service” of verse 5, *diakonia* is a general term used in secular Greek for all kinds of work—waiting on tables, the civil service, or a collection for the poor. The point is that even everyday acts of service must be included under this rubric.”<sup>111</sup>

This is one of the central themes of this project, that myriad gifts have been given to believers through the Spirit of God, as James declares, “Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom

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<sup>109</sup> Frederick W. Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>110</sup> *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, 944.

<sup>111</sup> D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1987), 34.

there is no variation or shadow due to change.<sup>112</sup> The church and its members would benefit from the expansion of its definition of spiritual gifts to include the “lesser” gifts—hospitality, giving, faith, even the gifts of music and dance can be recognized as being gifts of God to humanity through the Holy Spirit. It is the writer’s hope that this re-defining of what are spiritual gifts will help take the issue of spiritual gifts out of the realm of theological esoterica and help to dispel the stereotypical depiction of spiritual gifts as purely a Pentecostal or Charismatic phenomenon.

Carson also notes, “Similarly, *energēma*, or working, simply hints at the *energia*, or power of God that is operating. “Working” are merely “ways in which the divine power is applied”; it is almost co-extensive with *charismata*, but it gives prominence to the idea of power rather than that of endowment.”<sup>113</sup>

It is in this passage that Paul presents the precedent for spiritual gifts in the Christian faith community, a precedent that not only biblically undergirds this project, but is applicable to the postmodern faith community. This passage gives credence the researcher’s premise that the Holy Spirit has endowed *all* believers with spiritual gifts (cf. vv. 7), these gifts are given for God’s purpose, and it is possible to discover one’s spiritual gift.

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<sup>112</sup> James 1:17.

<sup>113</sup> Carson, 35.

## Historical Foundation

In this section selected writings of the early church founders and other theologians establish a basic foundation for a discussion of the role and status of *charismata*, the ‘gifts of the Spirit.’ Attention is given to significant figures that have contributed to the development toward a theology of spiritual gifts that informs this project. Writings from the first-century serve to illustrate the prevailing thought concerning gifts of the Spirit in the life of the church, the understanding of spiritual gifts during the Middle Ages, and how gifts of the Spirit are viewed in the church today.

In an attempt to establish a frame of reference in discussing spiritual gifts, Max Turner poses an appropriate question: “What activities or processes in the world external to language do we signify when we speak of ‘spiritual gifts?’”<sup>114</sup>

The answer to this question will assist in defining the parameters of spiritual gifts, the development of a theological understanding of spiritual gifts, and will help inform and shape a project whose goal is “developing lay leaders through identification of their spiritual gifts.”<sup>115</sup>

Guy Deffield points out “The Greek word *charisma*, which is rendered “spiritual gift,” comes from the basic word *charis*, which translates to ‘grace.’ A *charisma*, then, is an enablement, an endowment or a blessing bestowed freely, or by the ‘grace’ of God.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now* (Carlisle, Great Britain: Paternoster Press, 1996), 181.

<sup>115</sup> It is the writer’s contention that when laypersons develop an understanding of spiritual gifts beyond stereotypical descriptions and depictions, they are empowered to not only discuss spiritual gifts openly, but also encouraged to discover their own giftedness.

<sup>116</sup> G. P. Duffield, & N. M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), 328.

The first reference to the spiritual phenomena called spiritual gifts classifies them merely as “spirituals” or “things of the Spirit.”<sup>117</sup> Exactly the same descriptive is used in verse one of chapter fourteen. The reference probably is to the gifts, although in 1 Corinthians 14:28 the same word, *pneumatikos* (masc. gender) is to “spiritual persons.” F. F. Bruce understands *pneumatika* in this context to be “persons endowed with spiritual gifts.”<sup>118</sup>

Using this frame of reference, persons with spiritual gifts could be considered “gifts” given by God to the Church, by virtue of possessing attributes useful to the Church’s evangelical and operational mission in the world. Ronald Kydd informs us “basic to the understanding of a ‘spiritual gift’ is the idea that it is an ability which is given to someone by God. [God] is its source. It is not at the disposal of a [person], but rather it comes into play when God chooses.”<sup>119</sup> He also observes “Spiritual gifts seem to be tailored to particular situations. The main thrust of Paul’s teaching on this point is his insistence that the gifts are to build up the Christians among whom they appear. Then only find their meaning when they are carrying out this function within the Church.”<sup>120</sup>

The prevalence and acceptance of spiritually gifted persons was recognized in the early church. A document discovered in 1873 in the library of the Jerusalem monastery in Constantinople, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, also known as the *Didache*,

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<sup>117</sup> Duffield, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*, 328

<sup>118</sup> Duffield, 329.

<sup>119</sup> Ronald A. N. Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church: An Exploration into the Gifts of the Spirit During the First Three Centuries of the Christian Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984) 2.

<sup>120</sup> Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church*, 3.

contained teachings related to those who professed to be spiritually gifted <sup>121</sup>. The document, written in Middle East circa 50-100 C.E., underscores the acceptance of spiritual gifts in the early church. <sup>122</sup> Kydd notes, “To a large measure, the *Didache* focuses upon matters related to a class of wandering ministers.”<sup>123</sup>

These ministers, referred to as “prophets”, were to be governed by the precepts set forth in the *Didache*, precepts that gave instruction to the people regarding the prophets: “Allow the prophet to give thanks as much as they wish”,<sup>124</sup> and to also revere the prophetic utterance: “And you shall neither test nor judge any prophet who is speaking in the Spirit. For every sin will be forgiven, but this one will not be.”<sup>125</sup> Kydd points out “When a prophet spoke as a prophet, his message was not to be criticized. This exhortation reflects the esteem in which the prophetic message was held.”<sup>126</sup> The *Didache* not only recognized the gifts of the Spirit among those in the early church, it also distinguished between those who traveled from church to church, and those who held office in the church.

In his analysis of the text, Hans von Campenhausen observes “The coexistence of these various kinds of authority is not felt to be a problem, to start in every case from a supposed opposition between two separate blocs, the official and the charismatic, is a typical modern misunderstanding.

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<sup>121</sup> Kydd, 6.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>124</sup> *Didache*, 10:7.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 11:7.

<sup>126</sup> Kydd, 8.

Not only do office-holders possess the Spirit, but the spirituals for their part, to the extent that they rightly belong to the Church, derive the power of their teaching from the traditional apostolic truth.”<sup>127</sup> In support of this view he cites *Didache* 15:1 – 2: “Therefore choose for yourselves bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord, men who unassuming and not greedy, who are true and who have been approved, for they are performing the service of prophets and teachers for you. Therefore, do not despise them, for they are your honoured men, along with the prophets and teachers.”<sup>128</sup> Kydd also notes “The first thing that catches our attention in this passage is the fact that the bishops and deacons, the elected officials, were apparently doing the same things as the wandering charismatics.”<sup>129</sup>

While the text does not explicitly state the exact nature of that service, when we refer to Kydd’s working definition of spiritual gifts, the context indicates the word “service” means actions designed to edify, or build up the members of the church.

Clement of Rome, recognized as the third bishop of Rome, also acknowledged gifts of the Spirit in the everyday life of the church. In a letter to the church community at Corinth on behalf of the Roman church, he writes because, as Kydd notes, “Difficulties had arisen there, and he was trying to restore order.”<sup>130</sup> Clement writes “So let the whole body be preserved in Christ Jesus... and let each put himself at the service of his neighbor as his particular gift dictates.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>128</sup> *Didache* 15:1-2.

<sup>129</sup> Kydd, 11.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.



And to illustrate the need for Christians to use their gifts for the entire church, he writes, “The head, is nothing without the feet, just as the feet are nothing without the head.”<sup>132</sup> It is interesting to note that Clement’s thought parallels that of the apostle Paul, who in his letter to the church at Corinth wrote: “As it is there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again to head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”<sup>133</sup>

In both cases the writers are forming a case for unity and common concern in the church, and both attest to the presence and role of spiritual gifts given to the members to accomplish the work of the church. Ignatius of Antioch, a second-century bishop, firmly believed the gifts of the Spirit were real, and were present in his day. In a letter of encouragement to a fellow bishop, Polycarp of Smyrna, he writes, “ask for invisible things so that they may be made manifest to you in order that you may lack nothing and abound with all spiritual gifts.”<sup>134</sup>

Kydd notes “Ignatius offers this advice for an interesting reason. He does not want Polycarp to be deficient in any way, but, rather, he wants him to have all kinds of spiritual gifts. The word used is again a form of *charisma*, or gift given by God, and it seems to be used in the same sense as Paul gives it in Romans 12:6 and 1 Corinthians 12:4.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> 1 Cor. 12:21.

<sup>134</sup> Kydd, 15.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 15.

The similarity in thought and intent between Paul, Clement, and Ignatius, would indicate a common frame of reference, a common understanding of spiritual gifts and a common terminology in referring to gifts of the Spirit.

Justin Martyr was another who believed in the gifts of the Spirit beyond the Apostolic Age. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, he responds to Trypho's inquiry regarding Isaiah 11:2: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." Trypho asks, "How can he be proved to have already existed, seeing that he is filled by the power of the Holy Spirit, which the word enumerates by Isaiah, as though he lacked them?"<sup>136</sup> Justin's response provides an interesting interpretation of the relationship between the Son and the Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit:

These powers of the Spirit thus enumerated are said by the word to have come upon him, not as though he lacked them, but as being about to make their rest permanently upon him, that is, to come to an end with him, that there should be no longer prophets in your nation after the old manner, as you can plainly see, for there has been no prophets at all among you... The Spirit rested therefore, ceased, in other words, when Christ came. But after him, as this dispensation among men began in his time, it was necessary that those gifts should cease being among you, and yet, when they had taken their rest in Christ, should again, was prophesied. Be given by the grace of the power of the Spirit to them that believe on him, according to his knowledge of the deserts of each.<sup>137</sup>

In support of his assertion that spiritual gifts are now made available to believers through the ascendant Christ, and are now partakers of God's Holy Spirit, Justin cites two passages of Old Testament prophecy: the first is Psalm 68:18, "He ascended on high' he

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<sup>136</sup> Stanley M. Burgess, ed. *Christian Peoples of the Spirit: A Documentary History of Pentecostal Spirituality from the Early Church to the Present* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2011), 19.

<sup>137</sup> Justin Martyr, in *Christian Peoples of the Spirit*, 19.

led captivity captive; he gave gifts to the sons of men”<sup>138</sup> and Joel 2:28-29 “Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit.”<sup>139</sup>

He also writes, “For even the prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time.”<sup>140</sup> In chapter 39 of the *Dialogue*, Justin writes of Jews who were leaving the Jewish community to become Christians: “[Some] are also receiving gifts, each as he is worthy, illumined through the name of this Christ, for one receives the spirit of understanding, another of counsel, another of strength, another of healing, another of foreknowledge, another of teaching, and another of the fear of God.”<sup>141</sup> This would indicate the belief in the gifts of the Spirit beyond the biblical corpus and into the first and second centuries.

As the church continued, a variant form of the doctrine of spiritual gifts came to be known as ‘Montanism’ named after Montanus, whom Stanley Burgess characterizes as “a former priest of Cybele who had converted to Christianity and began to prophesy in his new context.”<sup>142</sup> His belief in the gifts of the Spirit expressed itself by a rejection of the Catholic Church as a means of grace, additional requirements of piety, such as rejection of second marriages, and preparation for martyrdom.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Ps. 68:18.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. Joel 2:28-29.

<sup>140</sup> Kydd, 27.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>142</sup> Burgess, *Christian Peoples of the Spirit*, 25.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

The church historian Eusebius relates the church's attitude toward Montanus' understanding of the gifts of the Spirit:

There is said to be a certain village of Mysia in Phrygia, called Ardaba, there, they say, one of those who was but a recent convert, Montanus by name, when Cratus was proconsul in Asia, in the excessive desire of his soul to take the lead, gave the adversary occasion against himself. So that he was carried away in spirit, and wrought up into a certain kind of frenzy and irregular ecstasy, raving, and speaking, and uttering strange things, and proclaiming what was contrary to the institutions that had prevailed in the church, as handed down and preserved in succession from the earliest times.<sup>144</sup>

Although the exact content of Montanus' speech is not given, it is clear the manifestation of his gift was not well received by the established church.

Augustine of Hippo also believed in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit beyond the Acts of the Apostles, yet did not accept the personhood of the Holy Spirit. Stanley Burgess notes, "For Augustine, the divine Spirit never assumed creature-form. He was, is, and eternally shall be consubstantial with the Father and the Son. He is the communion of divine mutual love between the Father and the Son, being at the same time, the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son.

As such, Augustine argues, the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and Son."<sup>145</sup> The Holy Spirit for Augustine was not co-equal with God and Jesus, but a shared substance that proceeds, or originates from both God and Jesus. In *The Trinity*, Augustine writes "

He [Holy Spirit] is the gift of the Father and of the Son, because on the one hand he *proceeds from the Father* (John 15:26) as the Lord says; and on the

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<sup>144</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, in *Christian Peoples of the Spirit*, 26.

<sup>145</sup> Burgess, 58.

other the apostle's words, *Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ is not one of his* (Romans 8:9), are spoken of the Holy Spirit. So when we say "the gift of the giver" and the giver of the gift," we say each with reference to the other. So the Holy Spirit is a kind of inexpressible communion or fellowship of Father and Son, and perhaps he is given this name properly called what they are in common, seeing that both Father and Son are holy and both Father and Son are spirit. So to signify the communion of them both by a name which applies to them both, the gift of both is called the Holy Spirit."<sup>146</sup>

Augustine also believed the Holy Spirit "Is the very presence of God's Law written in the hearts of men. Remission of sin is the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Outside the Church there is no Holy Spirit and no such forgiveness spirits received only in the church and that by the imposition of hands. At the same time, human will is assisted by the Holy Spirit as the Spirit pours out the love of God in the human heart."<sup>147</sup> It is worth noting the evolving relationship between the Spirit and the Church. This passage indicates Augustine makes participation in organized religion a condition for receiving the Holy Spirit, contrary to the conditional promise Jesus made to the disciples in John 14:11-16: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments, and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever."<sup>148</sup>

Hildegard of Bingen, a 11th century female mystic, placed great emphasis on the creative work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, insisting that it was possible to have a "personal Pentecost" by being touched by the fiery tongue of the Spirit.<sup>149</sup> She articulates a belief in the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity, and that once a person receives the Holy Spirit, there will be accompanying "fruits." Her definition of the

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>148</sup> Jn 14:15-16.

<sup>149</sup> Burgess, 99.

gifts of the Spirit is also noteworthy, for she not only bases her list of gifts on 1 Corinthians 12, but on Isaiah 11:1-3 as well: “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, the spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.”<sup>150</sup> The gifts enumerated in these passages (wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, and knowledge) are often associated with the ideal kingship of Jesus,<sup>151</sup> yet humanity is not excluded from possessing these desirable attributes.

Thomas Aquinas, the 13<sup>th</sup> century theologian and philosopher, believed that upon our ‘adoption’ as children of God, God infuses us with ‘spiritual habits’, and that these habits are virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The virtues of faith, hope and love; the moral virtues of justice, fortitude, temperance, and humility, and the “seven gifts of the Holy Spirit,” the *sacrum septenarium*, also based on Isaiah 11:1-3: the disposition toward good, wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, goodness and reverence for the Lord.<sup>152</sup> It is interesting to note that today we consider these gifts of the Spirit to be traits of ‘good character.’ Thomas also believed the ‘charismatic’ or ‘supernatural’ gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:8 -10 were not permanent endowments given by God through the Holy Spirit, but were transitory, limited to the Apostolic Age.<sup>153</sup>

George Fox rejected organized religion in his search for spiritual enlightenment, preferring to study the Bible himself. He came to the conclusion that since God was

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<sup>150</sup> Isa. 11:1-3.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 974.

<sup>152</sup> Burgess, 117.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 118.

within the faithful, believers could follow their own inner guide rather than rely on a strict reading of Scripture or the word of clerics.<sup>154</sup> He also believed that since the Bible made no mention of the Trinity, there was no distinction between God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. He believed in the power and immediacy of the Spirit, as he relates when he was moved to interrupt an Anglican worship service: “Now the Lord’s power was so mighty upon me, and so strong in me, that I could not hold, but was made to cry out and say, “oh, no it is not the Scriptures!” [By which people are to be guided], and I told them what is was, namely the Holy Spirit, by which the holy men of God gave forth the Scriptures, whereby opinions, religions, and judgments were to be tried; for it led into all truth, and so gave knowledge of all truth.”<sup>155</sup> For which he was arrested and jailed. He would go on to found the Society of Friends, or more commonly known as the Quakers.

John Wesley, the Anglican reformer and founder of the Methodist denomination, professed a profound belief in the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit’s working to in the lives of believers, having a conversion experience during a reading of Luther’s preface to the epistle of Romans in which his heart felt “strangely warmed,” and he received the revelation of his life’s work; “To reform the nation, particularly the church, and to spread Scriptural holiness over the land ... and by the grace of God to beget, preserve, and increase the life of God in the souls of men.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 177.

Carthage notes “Although to some extent tolerant of those claiming dramatic spiritual experiences, including dreams, vision, healing, revelations and prophecies, he regarded such phenomena as rare as seemed to have little time for ‘enthusiasts’.”<sup>157</sup>

Wesley is also noted for his doctrine of Wesleyanism, an “expression of holiness within charismatic spirituality.”<sup>158</sup> Wesley writes, “I believe every Christian who has not yet received it, should pray for the witness of God’s Spirit with his spirit that he is a child of God. In being a child of God, the pardon of his sins is included; therefore I believe the Spirit of God will witness this also. That this witness is from God, the very terms imply; and this witness I believe is necessary for my salvation.”

Wesley believed in the witness of the Spirit in salvation, that process that “begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) preventing grace including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him.”<sup>159</sup>

Charles Parham is recognized as the founder of the Pentecostal movement, having formulated a theology of Pentecostalism in Kansas in 1901. He combined the basic tenets that defined the Pentecostal movement: evangelical style conversion, sanctification, divine healing, premillennialism, and the eschatological return of Holy Spirit power evidenced by tongues.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Mark J. Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit: The Charismatic Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 48.

<sup>158</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit*, 89.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> Stanley M. Burgess, ed. *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 660.



It is interesting to note that what began as a proclamation of God's "deeds of power" in Acts<sup>161</sup> has now (according to Parham) been codified into 'proof' of the Holy Spirit's presence.<sup>162</sup>

### **Theological Foundation**

This project, in which members are called to undergo a process of spiritual formation through the spiritual disciplines of prayer, study, and meditation upon God's word to enable them to discern their spiritual gifts, based on practical theology performed through an African-American liberation theological context. Owen Thomas and Ellen Wondra define theology as "the reflection of Christian life amid the struggles for freedom or liberation, for the full humanity of all persons, and for the transformation of human persons as societies as manifestations of and in expectation of the reign of God."<sup>163</sup> They also note in the case of African-American theology "[members] and participants [are often] in communities that have been marginalized, subjugated, and disadvantaged relative to a dominant and dominating culture."<sup>164</sup>

In response, Thomas notes that African-American theologians "begin with the experience and practice of the community of which they are a part, and then clarify and

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<sup>161</sup> Acts 2:4.

<sup>162</sup> Burgess, *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 661.

<sup>163</sup> Owen Thomas and Ellen Wondra, *Introduction to Theology* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 1.

<sup>164</sup> Thomas and Wondra. *Introduction to Theology*, 7.

interpret that experience in the community's own terms."<sup>165</sup> It is the writer's assertion that the realization of one's spiritual giftedness to experience God to their fullest human potential, thereby 'freeing' the individuals to live lives of substance and positive meaning through the Spirit of God.

F. LeRon Shults notes:

The Israelites' desire for wisdom and justice in relation to Yahweh was wrapped up within their longing for freedom, which was expressed in their hope in the divine promise to provide space and time in which the community could experience spiritual well-being. The creative divine presence orients the people of God toward psychological and political freedom, which is a condition for beautiful life together, for a 'place' in which peaceful fellowship could flourish. This longing is evident throughout the defining story of the exodus from Egypt and the journey toward the Promised Land.<sup>166</sup>

This realization of freedom is not based in the concept of "free will," "the phenomena of personal intentionality, deliberation, and choice"<sup>167</sup>, but rather the freedom of the whole person, physically and spiritually, through their relationship with God through Christ. He cites John 8:32 "And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free"<sup>168</sup> referring to the freedom from sin and death through Christ. Shults also points out "For freedom Christ has set us free,"<sup>169</sup> and this being-called into freedom not about

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> F. LeRon Shults and Steven J. Sandage, *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 124.

<sup>167</sup> Shults and Sandage, *Transforming Spirituality*, 124.

<sup>168</sup> Jn. 8:32.

<sup>169</sup> Gal. 5:1.

the individual's "will" but about the real coming-to-be of human persons through fellowship in the Spirit."<sup>170</sup>

In their book, *Studying Congregations*, Nancy Ammerman, and editors state that theology is expressed in the life of the congregation in a host of different ways. They point out that congregations are "mosaic" in their makeup, and it is unlikely to find a single theology that dominates throughout the entire group. "There will indeed be fragments, and the picture they create may not easily emerge. You will more likely uncover a variety of theologies, developed in diverse ways and to different extents.

These theologies are likely to differ based on differences in the experiences of members and groups within the congregation."<sup>171</sup> The authors point out that before the researcher even begins the work of intentionally developing theologies within a congregation, it is important to note that the congregation most likely has already begun the work of forming them, even if inadvertently.

"Theologies do not begin, then when a congregation sets out to create them. They are already operative in the congregation before such conscious activity is undertaken, although they are likely to be in inchoate form. Bringing these implicit theologies to awareness is the beginning of forming a good picture of a congregation's composite theology."<sup>172</sup> Ammerman, *et al.*, point out that bringing to the surface the implicit theologies within the congregation is critical to understanding the congregation, because those theologies will impact the direction of the congregation, even if only covertly.

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<sup>170</sup> Shults, 124.

<sup>171</sup> Nancy Ammerman, ed., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 32.

<sup>172</sup> Ammerman, *Congregations*, 31.

Citing six perspectives that make up the congregation's theologies, the authors point out how each of them can either strengthen or undermine a congregation, depending on how they are approached.

The six perspectives that develop a congregations' theological outlook are: differences between congregational leaders and other members, generational differences, roles and experiences within the congregation, motivations for joining or staying in the congregation, the congregation's relationship to a denomination, the congregation's relationship to its parish, and finally, the congregation's relationship to the global community.<sup>173</sup>

Each of these perspectives play a part in the congregational identify of St. Paul. The congregation's relationship with the pastor is cordial, the congregation and the pastor have worked successfully together for the past eight years, yet the relationship between the congregation and the denomination is strained due to the financial obligations placed upon the local church to fund the work of the connectional church, yet the members of the local church discern no immediate benefit on the local level.<sup>174</sup> The older members are less active now, and the younger members are tentatively filling the void, yet many have not learned and internalized the denominational and political structure of the AME Church, which is also a source of friction.

If the focus group being studied for purposes of this project were to outline its collective theologies, there would be many more similarities than differences, given that

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>174</sup> It has been my personal observation that the members are not interested in what happens in the denomination, as evidenced by low levels of participation in connectional activities, preferring instead to focus their attention on worship and work at St. Paul.

St. Paul A.M.E Church, which is over sixty years old, has many members who are related by blood or marriage to the founding members. Recognizing the needs of an African-American congregation, the theological approach used for this project, and in the ministry at St. Paul has been one of liberation theology, with an emphasis on holistic freedom, through Christ, that allows members to live in the freedom and fullness of life. As James Cone states “The liberated, the free, are the ones who define the meaning of their being in terms of the oppressed of the land by participating in their liberation, fighting against everything that opposes integral humanity.”<sup>175</sup>

Another important aspect of African-American liberation theology is its “close connection with the practice of the Christian faith, including the practice of struggle, resistance, and hope.”<sup>176</sup> It is in the struggle against the forces that would dehumanize, enslave, and denigrate the humanity of the members of St. Paul that informs a theology that moves towards wholeness in Christ, empowerment through the Holy Spirit, and self-realization through the word of God.

Together this group has gone through grieving the loss of key members to death (adults and children) and changes in leadership (the A.M.E church functions according to a system of ministerial itinerancy). In addition, the majority of members share the same culture, societal background, and similar familial experiences, as the church is predominantly comprised of one extended African-American middle-class family. They share the history of progenitors who migrated from the South to Vallejo in search of a better life. The father working in the United States Navy’s Mare Island submarine yards,

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<sup>175</sup> James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 87.

<sup>176</sup> Thomas and Wondra, 7.

while the mother raised nine children of her own and any neighbor child who needed mothering.

This church family also shares a common history in the founding of the church in an unused chicken coop on a poultry farm, working together through the years to bring the church to where it now stands, in a unique chapel setting with an adjacent parking lot.

However, this journey was not without struggle and some measure of conflict due to different denominational affiliations. The father joined and later became an influential member of a local Baptist church, and the mother was a founding member of St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church. The children were immersed in both denominational traditions, and some chose to follow the Baptist tradition, some the Methodist, and there are those who seem to vacillate between the two faith traditions, alternately worshipping at either church. It is these stories and others that help inform the theological approach to this project for as Thomas notes, “theologies of liberation often draw on the work and reflection of “ordinary people.”<sup>177</sup>

To recognize and draw upon this wealth of the shared community knowledge, a practical approach to theology is used at St. Paul, a theological approach grounded in education through the Black presence in the Scriptures integrated with shared experiences of African-Americans in America and the world. This emphasis brings relevance to the project and the ministry at St. Paul. Reverend Walter McCray notes:

A significant number of Black, that is African people are noted in Scripture. The color and beauty of these Black persons is naturally accepted, the land from which they came is a point of reference, their history is remembered, their contributions are noted, their failures are described, and their future is

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

prophesized. These Black persons were part of the community of faith in both the Old and New Testaments.

They were respected and redeemed by God. And both individually and collectively, they played an important part in God's plan and work of salvation for the world.<sup>178</sup>

This emphasis has served to facilitate self-identification with persons in the Bible, and has provided relevance to the African-American experiences in America through the liberation narratives of the Old Testament, and the resistance and eschatological stories of the New Testament.

The theological doctrine of this project is rooted in the doctrine of creation: which purports God did not arbitrarily create the universe and all within it; instead, God had and has a plan for all within the universe and everyone and everything in it. Two aspects of this doctrine are central to this project: God who creates out of nothing (*Creatio ex nihilo*), and the God who is continually involved in an ongoing process of creation (*creatio continua*). Each of these aspects is crucial in moving the congregation toward the "image of Christ" (*imago dei*), the doctrine of Christian perfection represented by Christ.

When the founding members gathered to create what would become St. Paul, there were not many resources available. As one member related during an interview, "we held services in an old chicken coop behind the barn on the farm where one of the members worked. It was very simple, but we believed that God led us to it, and blessed us to use it."<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Walter A. McCray, *The Black Presence in the Bible: Discovering the Black and African Identity of Biblical Persons and Nations* (Chicago, IL: Black Light Fellowship, 1990), ix.

<sup>179</sup> Conversation with Sister Ruby Davis, SPAMEC Steward, Jun 17, 2012.

Another former member, who has went on to become an ordained pastor of her own church relates, “As children we would have to brush off the benches [of chicken feathers] before we could begin service. I remember standing in the back rows of benches with the other kids, and when we realized that if we stomped our feet while singing, dust would rise from the dirt floor, and it became a game to see how much dust we could raise before we were caught”.<sup>180</sup>

With these humble beginnings, a total dependence on God, recognized as Creator and Sustainer, is well within the ethos of this local church. At each step of their journey, these stakeholders have relied on their professed belief in God, who started this group on it's journey, God who has, through divine providence, placed each individual as a part of the whole, and who ‘makes a way’ through the challenges churches collectively and believers individually invariably face. The themes of liberation and empowerment by Creator God through the Holy Spirit are predominant in the theological life of St. Paul.

To theologically inquire into the nature of Creation, we must state what it means to the Church for Christian theology to recognize and affirm God as the Creator or Prime Cause of what we have come to know as the universe. The result of this recognition is an understanding of God that undergirds the stakeholders of this project, for God is recognized as the source of the church, its creation and growth, both numerically and spiritually. To accomplish this, it is helpful for the stakeholders in the local church to develop an understanding of God's nature as expressed in the act of creation, creation's response to the movement of God in creation, and the church's response to God's creative actions as recorded in the Bible. At the core of the Christian faith is the belief in

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<sup>180</sup> Conversation with Reverend Sharon Avril, Pastor of Antioch AMEC, July 18, 2012.



God as the creator and that belief carries through to God being the creator of everything and everyone.

This forms the basis of the Christian faith: “The Christian doctrine of God as Creator is not a cosmological theory. Rather, as Luther expressed in his *Small Catechism*, “God’s creation means ‘that God has created me and all that exists; that he has given me and still sustains my body and soul, all my limbs and fences, my reasons on my faculties of my mind...’ In short the doctrine of creation is a confession of man’s dependence on God.”<sup>181</sup>

In his analysis of the Creation account, Jenson points out “Genesis sets the world’s dependence on God’s will in the present tensed in that it asserts this dependence by stories that are etiological in their form; the stories are told as certification of our life as we now live it and our world as we now find it.”<sup>182</sup> The faith community traditionally accepts this narrative *prima facie* as to the origin of the universe, even where differences may exist between the communities of science and faith. God’s action in creation is not definable as a specific moment in what we refer to as “space-time,” an empirically observable moment of the transition from the ‘nothing’ of pre-creation to ‘being,’ or post-creation.

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<sup>181</sup> Alan Richardson, ed., *A Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 78.

<sup>182</sup> Robert W. Jenson, “Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation” in *The Doctrine of Creation: Essays in Dogmatics, History, and Philosophy*, Colin E. Gunton, ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1997), 19.

For as Helm points out in speaking of God's creative act "it is the bringing of the universe into being from a standpoint outside it. For this reason the idea that God exists (timelessly) 'before' the universe cannot mean that God exists temporally before."<sup>183</sup>

God exists even before the concept of 'time,' and 'time' for creation began in harmony with God's creative action. Moltmann points out, "The divine act of creation is never described in differentiated terms. Nor is it dissected into a number of different processes. It is unified and unique. This means among other things that time is excluded from the act of creation, for time always require duration, and creation takes place suddenly, as it were – in a moment."<sup>184</sup>

The issue of the nature of creation is very important to the foundation of this project, as many new and young believers within the congregation often wrestle with the concept of creation according to the Biblical narratives in light of seemingly contradictory evolutionary theory and geological evidence. Some members admitted they had questions concerning the divine intent in creation, questions in reconciling the biblical account with advances in scientific knowledge, and concerning the church's relevance in the post-modern era. These and similar concerns voiced by the members of St. Paul and have led to lively, and (the writer hopes) fruitful discussions on the nature of humanity's role in Creation.

Nevertheless, while those discussions were unable to definitively answer these questions on the mechanics of creation, they provided an excellent starting point for our discussions regarding the role of spiritual formation in the process of developing spiritual

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<sup>183</sup> Paul Helm, "Eternal Creation: the Doctrine of the Two Standpoints," in *Doctrine of Creation*, Gunton, ed. 31.

<sup>184</sup> Moltmann, 73.

maturity. As our discussions continued, we were led to the conclusion that the faith of those who believe is birthed and developed in the absence of scientific evidence or empirical proof. As John Polkinghorne states “theology is concerned with the ontological origin and not with temporal beginning”.

He elaborates:

The idea of creation has no special stake in a datable start of the universe. If Hawking is right, and quantum effects means that the cosmos as we know it is like a kind of ‘fuzzy space-time egg’, without a singular point at which it all began, that is scientifically very interesting, but theologically insignificant. When he poses the question, ‘but if the universe were really completely self-contained, having no boundaries or edge, it would have neither beginning nor end: it would simply be. What place, then, for a creator?’ It would be theologically naïve to give any other answer than: Every place - as the sustainer of the self-contained space-time egg and as the ordain or of its quantum laws. God is not a God of the edges, with a vested interest in boundaries.<sup>185</sup>

It is also useful to note that according to Genesis, creation is a purposive act that has its origin in the thought of God, and its realization is through the power of God, for it is God who declared that there would be “light”, and creation responded to God’s sovereign will.<sup>186</sup> While there are questions that believers must confront and consider, the outset of anyone’s spiritual journey is in essence a decision to believe the biblical narrative as the authoritative Word of God, and as an expression of the Will of God.

Jenson notes:

The motif of creation by manufacture, obviously present in the traditions of priestly writer took up, is rigorously subordinated to creation by speaking. That speaking - as we have noted - is command, and the up beat to the downbeat ‘God said’ is ‘and it is good’. It is vital to grasp that in Genesis’ story also the “and it

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<sup>185</sup> Helm, *Eternal Creation*, 31.

<sup>186</sup> Gen. 1:3.

was good” belongs to the creative act itself: things are *in that* they are judged good by God. *Tov* in Hebrew works just like ‘good’ in English: it says ‘good for’ something. Things are good in that God judges that they are good for his purposes.<sup>187</sup>

This writer considers the Will of God to be for the good of the creation God has made. This is vital in the spiritual formation of the stakeholders in this project, for it undergirds the faith of new and young believers by affirming the ‘good’ intent of God in their lives in spite of the adversities, difficulties, and uncertainties believers face. One of the core teachings in this project has been that all spiritual gifts are given by God for building the Kingdom of God, for as Paul declares “for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”<sup>188</sup> God will sustain it, and bring it to fruition for as Paul terms “his good pleasure.”

The act of creation has its sole origin in the mind and will of God. John of Damascus states, “He [God] creates by thinking, and what is though comes actually to subsist as a work carried on by the Logos and perfected by the [Holy] Spirit.”<sup>189</sup> It is the writer’s agreement with this assertion that God is a God who creates, who brings *into* existence, all that we perceive as reality. Moreover, this creative process is aligned with the life-affirming nature and purpose of God, a purpose which finds expression through using our creative ability in this world for the glory of God.

Whether in science, art, religion *et al*, our creativity is a reflection of God’s creative nature, and consequently, is not an attribute possessed by a select few, but an

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<sup>187</sup> Jenson. *Aspects*, 22.

<sup>188</sup> Phil. 2:13.

<sup>189</sup> Jenson, 23.

inherent component of the human spirit, just as creativity is an inherent component of God's nature.

Hugh of Saint Victor says of God's creativity:

God made humankind for himself; God created all of the things that comprise human beings. He made humankind for himself, not because he needed humankind, but so that humankind could enjoy him, for he could give nothing better. The rest of creation was made so that it would both be subject to humankind from its creation and would serve the use of humankind. Therefore, humankind, as though situated in a kind of middle place, has God above itself and the world below. By the body, humankind is connected to the world below, and by the spirit it is lifted up toward God above. It was necessary that the creation of visible things be so arranged that human beings would recognize in them exteriorly what the invisible good they were to seek within was like; that is, that human beings would see beneath them what they were to desire about them.<sup>190</sup>

God's creativity therefore is mirrored in creation as a declaration of God's glory, for as the Psalmist declared: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork."<sup>191</sup> This writer is reminded of a conversation with Rev. Dr. Damon Powell, Director of the East Bay Aids Coalition, who is also one of this writers professional associates. Dr. Powell quotes author Jan Phillips:

It is blasphemous for any of us to say, "I am not creative". All we *do* is create. We have desires and we create experiences from our desires. We have experiences and we create stories about those experiences. We hear the stories of others, and we are moved to tell our own, turn them into songs, poems, or YouTube movies. We wake up every day to an empty canvas of twenty-four hours and every night we go to bed having created our masterpiece for the day.

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<sup>190</sup> Boyd T. Coolman, Dale M. Coulter, eds., *Trinity and Creation: A Selection of Works of Hugh, Richard and Adam of St. Victor* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers n.v, 2010) 74.

<sup>191</sup> Ps. 19:1.

We can do this consciously or unconsciously, but we all do it nevertheless. Moreover, the ones who are conscious of it are the ones most actively engaged in the work of evolution, of unification, of ongoing cosmic revelation.<sup>192</sup>

This statement led this writer to consider ways to incorporate this idea of ‘innate creativity’ into this project, with the hope of encouraging members to appropriate the concept into their own spiritual formation. Consequently, one of the focus study areas developed for this project has been to foster an understanding of God’s creative nature, and to enable members “make the connection.” For the stakeholders in local church to connect with their creativity, they too must share in the creative nature of God and allow that nature to express itself in everyday actions.

Christoph Schwöbel states: “Christian faith and Christian action form an indissoluble unity. There is no faith that does not generate a specific form of action, otherwise we would call the presence or authenticity of faith into question. And there is no action that does not presuppose some sort of faith, otherwise we would feel justified asking whether such behavior could qualify as action. In fact, we see it as a legitimate and productive criterion to assess the character of faith by the fruits it produces, since faith is constitutive element of a person’s capacity to act.”<sup>193</sup>

For the segment of the Christian community represented by the stakeholders in the local church, faith expresses itself in life-affirming creative acts that benefit those in need, and demonstrate the creative, life-affirming nature of God. Horne cites what Koestler terms the human capacity for creative acts as “biosciative,” which is a

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<sup>192</sup> Email conversation with Dr. Powell, June 20, 2012.

<sup>193</sup> Gunton, 151.

“connective and relational power that is peculiar to the human species.”<sup>194</sup> Koestler notes that of all creation, only humanity possesses some measure of creativity, and creativity is an inherent attribute of God.

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.”<sup>195</sup> In this account of Creation, many theologians have interpreted these verses to describe the creation of the universe from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* posits God as the First Cause and that Creation is totally dependence of upon God for its existence. This dependence is not only for its inception, but also in its sustentation.

The development of this doctrine has its origin in Christianity’s response to the theological and philosophical assumptions made by pagan writers regarding the creation of the world. Greek scholars, such as Plato and Socrates, held that the world was created from a form of pre-existing matter, or primordial chaos.<sup>196</sup> The work of the Creator was viewed as an “ordering” of matter, rather than the creation. Early Christian apologists sought to interpret the creation account in light of their faith in God as Creator and sustainer of the universe.

A defining moment in the development of the doctrine *creatio ex nihilo* can be found in *The Shepherd of Hermas*. It provides an explicit affirmation of the doctrine, stating, “...believe that God is one, who made all things and perfected them, and made all

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>195</sup> Gen. 1:1-2.

<sup>196</sup> Joseph N. Torchia, *Creatio ex nihilo and the Theology of St. Augustine* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1999), 5.

things to be out of that which was not, and contains all things and is himself alone uncontained.”<sup>197</sup>

This statement of God’s sovereign action in initiating Creation signifies God’s existence before creation, and places God apart from that which was created. In tracing the development of *creatio ex nihilo*, Joseph Torchia cites Athenagoras of Athens, who made a clear distinction between God and Creation. Athenagoras posits that while God is uncreated and eternal, matter is created and perishable. Torchia cites, “Athenagoras proceeds from the metaphysical presupposition that what truly exists is unbegotten, and hence, causally dependent upon nothing else for it’s being...if God is ontologically distinct from all things, there can be no room for a second god or other gods.”<sup>198</sup> Athenagoras’ argument is firmly rooted in the belief in a monotheistic God, but also a God who, being unaffected by time, nevertheless created a Creation that is based in space and passes ‘through’ time.

Tatian of Syria also viewed creation as a process that begins with God as the First Cause, but went further in this thought, dividing the Creation event into two distinct stages. He constructs this causal chain of reasoning; “God begets the *Logos* (Word), the *Logos* in turn begets matter, and the world emerges from the *Logos*’ formative action upon matter.”<sup>199</sup> Nevertheless, while Tatian states a belief in God as the First Cause, and the *Logos* as acting as a formative force upon matter, this force is imposed upon a form of chaotic matter, and no real distinction is made between whether it is pre-existing matter, or matter *created* by the *Logos*.

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<sup>197</sup> Torchia, *Creatio ex nihilo*.. 6.

<sup>198</sup> Torchia, 8.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 10.



Theophilus of Antioch provides a clear articulation of the doctrine *creatio ex nihilo*, when he states “because God is uncreated, He has no beginning; because He is immortal, He is wholly unchanging.”<sup>200</sup> In his analysis of the nature of God, he refers to God as “Demiurge” and “Maker”, underscoring the fact that God's creative role is more than a demiurgic formation or ordering.<sup>201</sup> This is encouraging to the members of the local church, who can believe that God is greater than creation, and his creative goodness is not subject to the vicissitudes of human emotion and desires.

Interestingly, Theophilus does not base his analysis on the first chapter of Genesis, but upon the Apocryphal book of Second Maccabees: “I beg you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. And in the same way the human race came into being.”<sup>202</sup> This understanding forms the basis of the Genesis narrative, where God designed a creation that is self-replicating, self-directed, and within certain limitations, self-healing, and brought it from thought into existence. Consequently, the local stakeholders in this project can trust God to be involved in their particular circumstance and God has equipped them to participate and thrive in creation.

Theophilus wholly accepts this declaration of creation from ‘nothingness’ and goes on to point out that God's uniqueness is in the fact that God can make “whatever he wishes out of the non-existent,” and “the ability to give life and motion belongs to no one

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>202</sup> 2 Macc. 7:27-28.

but God alone.”<sup>203</sup> Moreover, it is this ‘uniqueness’ is what delineates God role and Creator from the Creation, underscoring God’s preeminence and power over Creation.

His treatise is important in the formulation of *creatio ex nihilo* as a theologically sound foundation for the Christian faith. In his critique of Plato’s *Timaeus*, Theophilus points out an inconsistency in Plato’s reasoning concerning God and matter: “while the Platoists acknowledge that God is uncreated, they hold that matter is also uncreated and hence, coeval with God.” In response, Theophilus presents an effective rebuttal: “if God and matter were both uncreated, eternal, and immutable, then God’s absolute sovereignty would be compromised.”<sup>204</sup>

The theologian Origen also made a significant contribution to the development of the doctrine, believing that God is the “ultimate creative principal responsible for the existence of all things.”<sup>205</sup> He provides a clear, unequivocal articulation of the doctrine, systematically expounding upon his understanding of the creative process. Torchia cites: “Origen provides a clear articulation of *creatio ex nihilo*. At the onset of *De Principiis*, he expounds upon the Church’s teaching regarding the origin of the world in terms of three components: *first*, that the world was made; *secondly*, that the world took its beginning in time; and *thirdly*, that due to its inherent corruptibility, the world will be destroyed.”<sup>206</sup>

Origen’s position forever separated matter from God, for even the Stoics and Gnostics agreed that God (or the First Cause) was and is eternal.

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<sup>203</sup> Torchia, 11.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 15.

Ambrose of Milan's furthered the thought of God's act of creation as occurring beyond the boundaries of that, which is created. In his analysis of Genesis also reveals the significance of *creatio ex nihilo*:

The term 'beginning'... is concerned with the category of time when we deal with the question of the time when God made heaven and earth... at the commencement of the world, when it began to come into being... If we apply the term to number, then it is right that you understand that at first He created heaven and earth; next, hills, regions, and the boundaries of the inhabitable world. Or we may understand that before He created the rest of visible creatures... He created heaven and earth. But, if you apply the term to foundation, you will see... that the beginning is the foundation...<sup>207</sup>

He supports this position with his exegesis of Genesis 1:2, with his analysis of the term *beginning* as the contextual origin of the world. Torchia cites: "In foundational terms, the teaching that God created *in the beginning* means that God brought the very principles of all realities into being from nothing. Accordingly, the creation of heaven and earth and the creation of all aspects of the world are dependent upon a fundamental of act of *creatio ex nihilo* on the part of God."<sup>208</sup>

The importance of this doctrine cannot be overstated in relation to the Christian faith, the African Methodist Episcopal Church as a connectional entity, the stakeholders in this project, and the relationship of believers to God and each other. This doctrine offers hope to those who believe that through sharing and participating in God's creative nature, we too can create new beginnings, new opportunities, and new growth even in the face of unfavorable circumstances or limited resources.

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

For if God can create all that we know, all that we see, and even that which we can not perceive, can not God create a new opportunities for experiences which glorify God and promote Christian growth within the community that professes faith in God?

The idea of creation being continually renewed through the Holy Spirit finds support in the 104<sup>th</sup> Psalm. When we examine verses 24-30 we find that the Psalmist acknowledges the fact God is not only the Creator, but also its sustainer:

O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things in are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your Spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.<sup>209</sup>

It is important to note that central to the notion of creator God is the idea of a God who is still in the business of creating continuing creation. Jürgen Moltmann expresses his theology of God continuing to act in creation: "So if 'creation' is the be the quintessence of the whole divine creative activity, the corresponding doctrine of creation must then embrace creation in the beginning, creation and history, and creation in end time: *creatio-originalis*, *creatio-continua*, and *creatio-nova*. 'Creation' is the term of God's initial creation, his historical creation, and his perspective creation. The idea of God's unity is preserved only for the concept of creation as a meaningfully coherent process."<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Ps. 104:24 - 30.

<sup>210</sup> Moltmann, 55.

Not only is creation a phenomenon contained within the purview and presence of God, but it is also an ongoing phenomenon. This brings hope to the members of the local church, who can confidently look forward to what God is going to do, because God never ceases being involved creatively with humanity. When we consider the fact that the rotational motion of our planet brings a “new” period of daylight to inhabitants according to their location on the globe, God original action in creation continues to create ‘new’ opportunities for those created to ‘create’ new experiences by participating in the ‘new’ day. As we participate in the ‘new’ time created by God, we pass through time, and for the purposes of this project, this writer submits that it is in this passage that we encounter the future, which could be called the “new creation” we receive from God. Paul Helm supports this view of continuous creation, stating:

From our standpoint God’s creation is continuously unfolding, it is a *creatio continua*. The state of the universe at time  $t^1$  does not logically necessitate the character nor even the existence of any phase at  $t^2$  or later, even though there are discovered regularities between different past phases, and promised continuations of them, for as long as the created order persists unregenerated. So from our perspective the Creator may be said to be continuously creating the universe, in that there is more universe today than there was yesterday, for the present builds upon and is made intelligible by the past. But from the divine standpoint what is created is one temporally extended or ordered universe.<sup>211</sup>

The notion that creation is continual is significant in the thinking of the stakeholders of St. Paul. In light of the passing of many of the church’s’ charter members, small church membership, and the financial challenges small churches face, those that remain continue to believe that God is not ‘through with them yet’ and is still actively working among them, bringing the church to perfection.

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<sup>211</sup> Gunton, 35.

They carry the same hope with which Paul greeted the church at Philippi when he reminded them that God was not yet finished with them: “I am confident of this, that the one [God] who began a good work among you will bring it to completion be the day of Jesus Christ.”<sup>212</sup>

Even in ancient times, the fundamental concept of theological anthropology has been the *imago dei*: human beings have been created to be God's image on earth. This view is supported by Genesis 1:26-27: “Then God said, “let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the Earth. So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”<sup>213</sup>

Moltmann notes, “The term [image of God] was used to describe the ideal picture of human beings in their primal condition, the image that-obscured or destroyed to the fall-is restored through God's grace.”<sup>214</sup> He understands humanity in terms of God's final act of creation, and when God says, “let us make”, this implies a collective consensus of the Triune God expressing God's will. And while not explicitly stated as such, Moltmann maintains this passage indicates, “God [Father] creates *through* Jesus [Son] *in* the Holy Spirit (Italics mine). Thus the statement “the created world is therefore created ‘by God’, formed ‘through God’, and exists ‘in God.’”<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Phil. 1:6.

<sup>213</sup> Gen. 1:26-27.

<sup>214</sup> Moltmann, 215.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 9.

For the members of the church to come to this 'ideal' of spiritual development there must be a progressive movement from spiritual infancy and immaturity toward spiritual maturity to what John Wesley calls "Christian Perfection," that "love of God and our neighbour which implies deliverance from all sin; that is received merely by faith; that is given instantaneously, in one moment; that we are to expect it, not at death, but every moment; that now is the accepted time, now is the day of this salvation."<sup>216</sup>

This is then the goal of every Christian: that state of being wholly committed to following the precepts of God. As Dan Dick notes:

Spiritual growth as a process can be seen clearly through the lens of the stages of human growth. Just as people move from conception through birth, early childhood and adolescence, to adulthood and full maturity, so individuals and faith communities begin at spiritual conception and grow through the various stages to maturity, the full stature or the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). At full maturity, the body of Christ is able to honor the needs and abilities of individuals wherever they are in their journey of faith. And whatever our spiritual gifts are, individually and collectively, they will provide a uniquely suitable opening for the power of the Holy Spirit to reach out through our hearts and carry on the work of transformation from discipleship through true fellowship to faithful stewardship.<sup>217</sup>

Through the spiritual gifts project, the members of St. Paul have begun the process of spiritual formation and growth, and that growth will continue as the members continue to seek God's presence and purpose in their lives.

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<sup>216</sup> John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London, England: The Epworth Press, 1952), 41.

<sup>217</sup> Dan R. Dick and Barbara Miller, *Equipped for Every Good Work: Building a Gifts-Based Church* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2003), 98.

This process, consisting of spiritual formation and the identification and assessment of one's spiritual gifts, holds great promise for the local church stakeholders, and others in small, mid-size, and large churches, through the small-group study model.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The title of this ministry model is “Developing Lay Leadership Through the Identification and Assessment of Spiritual Gifts in a Local A.M.E Church.” The context selected for this project proposal was Saint Paul A.M.E. Church of Vallejo, a small urban church in Northern California. This small, middle-class, African-American congregation recently celebrated its sixty-ninth anniversary, but has experienced a decline in attendance in worship, participation in the ministries of the church, with a corresponding decline in financial support.

The hypothesis of this ministry model reflects the need to develop an appreciation for a gifts-based model of ministry for the church. It is based on the supposition that many members do not know what their spiritual gifts are, and consequently, do not seek out ways to serve God through using those gifts in lay ministry in and out of the church. In addition, the lack of understanding of the critical role gifts of the Spirit play in the life of a church in general, and how to apply their assigned gifts in particular, has, in the opinion of this researcher, led many to remain idle in the work of the church.

The stakeholders in the local church a process whereby they can gain a better understanding of their gifts given to all believers by the Holy Spirit and how to apply them in ministering to others.

The members of the local church would also benefit from a greater understanding of how those gifts, when combined with the gifts of others members, best serve to meet the needs of the congregation and the needs of God's Kingdom.

The objective of this project is to create a biblically based church, where members are spiritually sensitive to their gifts and are seek positions of service based on the way they were knit together by God. The premise is, by undergoing the assessment process, participating in Bible Studies focusing on spiritual gifts, and listening to a series of sermons focused on gifts of the Spirit, the participants would gain a better understanding of their role as ministers (based on priesthood of all believers) and be better equipped to serve in ministries of the church.

It is believed that when the participants undergo training that assists finding their unique area of giftedness and applying that to their personality and passions, they would then be encouraged to use their gifts, and would see the positive impact of that service in the church lead to overall fulfillment. Additionally, because members of any congregation are not called into community by accident or blind circumstance, any church where the members are operating within their area of giftedness also stands a greater potential for visioning God's purpose in their lives and walking toward God's planned future for them and their congregation.

The spiritual gifts training, which consisted of a survey to determine the views of participants prior to the training, can be found in Appendix B, the Network spiritual gifts assessment, found in Appendix C, and the post training survey which can be found in Appendix F. During the special training on leadership through spiritual gifts, participants were provided handouts on conducting small group study, and literature on spiritual gifts.

## The Planning Process

The project was implemented shortly after the researcher returned from the Phase 4 Intensive session conducted at United Theological Seminary in Trotwood, Ohio. The project was used as a way to assist members in identifying their spiritual gifts, and encouraging the laity within the church in using those gifts.

Using Richard Davies' Handbook for Doctor of Ministries Projects and Miles Huberman's Qualitative Data Analysis, a process was set in place to begin the project. Davies' practical approach to the doctor of ministry project proved helpful in bringing the project into greater crystallization. Beginning with the basics, in the chapter entitled "Building a Question," he instructs the researcher to observe something, have a frame of reference, formulate objectives and hypotheses, identify variables and evaluate.<sup>1</sup>

Using this approach, the project centered on the following question: Would a sixty-nine year-old congregation, using relevant assessment tools designed to measure giftedness and other key variables, be able to engender a greater willingness to engage in ministry based on spiritual giftedness? Or would they because of the past practices and experiences be reluctant to shift from the current practice of engaging in acts of ministry based on factors that do not take giftedness into consideration, such as need, desire, and comfort?

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Davies, *Handbook for Doctor of Ministry Projects: An Approach to Structured Observations of Ministry* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 40-43.

Davies encouraged researchers to avoid the “how do I” question.

It is neither unusual nor inappropriate for the minister to approach the D.Min. thesis with a “program” orientation. The consequence of this orientation is to phrase the question with the words, “How do I ... ?” or “How can I...?” The problem is that this is not a question that will lead to growth in the ministry. By itself, such a question leads the minister to plan a church program similar to any other program he or she has planned in the past. It may be more elaborate, or more study may have gone into it, but it will not qualitatively different.”<sup>2</sup>

Instead Davies encourages the minister who is stuck on the “how to” or “how do I” approach to try revising the question so that it deals with clear options. For example, “Would approach A or approach B be more effective in solving this problem in my congregation?”<sup>3</sup>

The frame of reference of the project is from the perspective of the pastor, who in his role as under-sheppard (Christ being the Sheppard) for the past eight years, has observed that many people were begrudgingly carrying out ministries out of need or a sense of obligation to the pastor rather than out of their giftedness. The pastor/researcher in his role as pastor preaches and teaches the belief that God has a plan for every life. As Creator of all things, God is neither arbitrary nor capricious; rather, God is creative, intentional and purposeful in God’s design toward God’s creation. Paul states it best: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Davies, *Handbook*. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. 2:10.

Individuals who take the time to discern how God has crafted or “wired” them will perform most optimally in the place where God had purposed them, and as a result they will find fulfillment in their lives through the praxis of their area of giftedness.

Undoubtedly, that fulfillment will come as they serve God with joy, passion, enthusiasm, confidence, and pride. No better advertisement for the Kingdom of God can be offered than fulfilled Christians who know who they are, whose they are, and what they are designed and called to do. The objective was to implement a process to ensure that each participant would view herself or himself as a uniquely gifted person with the capacity to serve in areas that matched that individual’s spiritual gifts as a means of serving God through serving others.

To achieve that objective, the ministry model would place an increased emphasis on identifying and assessing participants’ proclivity for certain spiritual gifts and providing assistance in identifying opportunities in those areas of lay ministry that best corresponded to their spiritual makeup. The hope of the researcher is that a greater degree of confidence in performing lay ministry and satisfaction in that participation would emerge in the participant’s spiritual and personal life, as well as in the life of the church.

The project had both independent and dependent variables. The independent variables—the things the researcher could influence – included the ten lay members of the researchers’ Context Group, those persons selected because of their demonstrated love and commitment to Christ, whether or not they currently serve in an official capacity. All were asked to participate in this spiritual gifts process, but they were given the choice to opt out. None did so.

The dependent variables would involve trying to measure the success of the project based on how well participants understood the importance of gifts-based ministry and by measuring their understanding of spiritual gifts and their willingness to use them in ministry.

Then comes the evaluation process. Again, Davies points out the importance of carefully framing the question in the beginning, because when the question is clear, the evaluation flows naturally. By framing the question properly, Davies means that procedures for evaluating the project will be built in from the beginning. "This will be a statement of exactly what you are going to observe, how you are going to observe it (tests, questionnaires, third party reports, your own subjective observation, etc.) and what results will indicate success or failure."<sup>5</sup> This project was completed using questionnaires both before and after training implementation, as well as subjective observation by the pastor to arrive at conclusions.

The questionnaire was designed to gauge the participants' level of understanding of spiritual gifts in performing ministry within the local church. Did they know their spiritual gifts? Were they aware of other areas that affected their area of service in the church? Were they operating in their area of giftedness? How satisfied were they and so on. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and to offer additional responses where they could. Davies offers some very basic beginning tips for preparing questionnaires, ranging from practice writing the opening memo and instructions to the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 44.

evaluator to limiting the questionnaire to the bare essentials.

In the area of reliability and validity, Davies offers more useful advice:

How well your questionnaire gives you the information you need depends on how valid it is, and it will not be valid unless it is reliable... For most D. Min. research purposes, a questionnaire can be considered reliable if people will give the same answers (assuming external conditions have not changed) the second time around. You will probably not need to test your questionnaire's reliability, but you must think about it. If a question is ambiguous (subject to two or more interpretations), no one can predict which interpretation will provide the basis for the answer. Ambiguity may arise from the way the question is written (imprecise language), or from the way the question is laid out on the paper.<sup>6</sup>

The overall process is as follows: First, participants were given an initial survey to gauge their current understanding of spiritual gifts and servant-leadership (Appendix B). Second, a series of Leadership/Spiritual Gifts Workshops were led by the pastor consisting of the Responsive Listening Bible Study series focusing on the nature of spiritual gifts (Appendix D).

Following those sessions the researcher administered a spiritual gifts assessment, the Network assessment that measured participants' passion and style. A copy of the Network assessment can be found in Appendix C and their Corresponding definitions in Appendix G. The Context Associates also completed a questionnaire targeting the participants view regarding spiritual gifts. A copy of the questionnaire used for this project can be found in Appendix F. Third, to augment the teachings and make it relevant for the entire congregation, the pastor preached a series of sermons on "Opening Your Gifts Now" during the month of June 2012 (See Appendix H.).

Finally, the pastor conducted one-on-one interviews with members of the Context Group to review the findings of the gifts questionnaire.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 123.

## Research Design, Measurement and Instrumentation

The term used for the type of research projects conducted at United Theological Seminary is "Action Research." David. J. Greenwood and Morten Levin in their book, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*, define Action Research (AR), as "social research carried out by a team encompassing a professional action researcher and members of an organization or community seeking to improve their situation. AR promotes broad participation in the research process and supports action leading to a more just or satisfying situation for the stakeholders."<sup>7</sup> It is primarily qualitative in nature but no less informative than the traditional quantitative analyses.

In their section on "The Nature of Qualitative Data," authors Mathew Miles and A. Michael Huberman note the following:

In some senses, all data are qualitative; they refer to essences of people, objects and situations (Berg, 1989). We have "raw experience, " which is then converted to words ("His face is flushed". . . "He is angry") or into numbers ("Six voted yes, four no". . . "The thermometer reads 74 degrees. "). In this book . . . the words are based on observation, interviews, or documents (or as Wolcott [1992] puts it, "watching , asking or examining. "). These data collection activities typically are carried out in close proximity to a local setting for a sustained period of time.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Davydd J. Greenwood, and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication, Inc., 1998), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 9.



It should be noted, however, that some scholars take issue with placing too much emphasis on the qualitative, as it relates to Action Research. In fact, it can be plausibly stated that, actually, qualitative and quantitative analyses are in a way inextricably linked.

Miles and Huberman note that even when qualitative research is conducted, counting – hence, quantitative analysis – still happens in the background. “When we say something is ‘important’ or ‘significant’ or ‘recurrent,’ we have come to that estimate, in part, by making counts, comparisons, and weights.

Greenwood and Levin make the same argument.

We also have noticed a tendency for people to believe that AR must be qualitative research rather than quantitative research. This unjustifiable assumption probably arises from the belief that action-oriented work cannot be scientific (precisely because it involves action) and the additional assumption (erroneous in our view) that quantitative research must be more scientific than qualitative research. Because we see no merit to those assumptions, we reject the notion that AR is qualitative research only.<sup>9</sup>

In attempting to gauge the understanding, opinions and feelings of the stakeholders at St. Paul in the area of spiritual gifts awareness and application, the pastor used both qualitative and quantitative research analyses. It was gratifying to have access to both methods and to apply them liberally, knowing results would be respected. The added value for the researcher of being able to pose open-ended questions in the name of research that addressed real-life church issues was invaluable, because it gave the participants an opportunity to answer openly and honestly as well, in the name of research.

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<sup>9</sup> Greenwood and Levin, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*, 4.

### **Ministry Model Implementation**

The project began with an initial survey, which assessed the participants' current understanding of spiritual gifts and servant leadership. Next, the Network spiritual gifts assessment instrument was administered, which identified the gifts of each participant. Following the assessment, a twenty-question survey was administered to participants that sought their opinions and feelings regarding church's movement toward a gifts-based model. The initial feedback from the participants conveyed mixed feelings around the practicality of implementing a gifts-based model. Some believed that the needs of a small congregation did not allow for the luxury of service based on gifts.

More detailed findings will be presented in Chapter Five, where Field Experience is discussed.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIELD EXPERIENCE**

The hypothesis for this project states that one of the ways a congregation can best be invigorated to do Kingdom work is to participate in a process of spiritual formation, becoming aware of the gifts of the Spirit, discovering which gift(s) are theirs, and finally, making a commitment to serve God by using their gifts for the good of the faith community and to make a positive impact in the greater community.

The groundwork for this project was laid during this pastor's enrollment in the doctoral program at United Theological Seminary, in Trotwood, Ohio. Working with Dr. Ricky Woods and Dr. Terry Thomas, co-mentors of the Preaching and Leadership cohort, this researcher underwent a process of prayerful reflection, written introspection (via the spiritual autobiography), a close examination of his context of ministry, with a sincere desire to explore the issues facing St. Paul. This writer developed the hypothesis in answer to the question "how can more members of St. Paul become actively involved in the work of the church?"

The 'work of the church' is not only reflected in the mission statement of the Great Commission, which is Jesus' injunction to all disciples to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

However, the work of discipleship training and using our spiritual gifts by the grace of God also coincides with the mission statement of the AME Church: “to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical needs of all people.”<sup>1</sup>

In order to meet those needs, the resources of the entire church must be brought to bear: time, talents (gifts), and treasure of all members are necessary if the local church is to have any chance of making a difference in the community. Why weren't more members of St. Paul engaged in the work? According to the results of the initial survey, many respondents did not know what their gifts were, or what opportunities existed for using those gifts. In an attempt to correct this situation, the writer led a series of sermons and Bible Studies as a strategy for creating awareness of the gifts of the Spirit that have been given to all believers for use in the present day, and the opportunities available to use those gifts at St. Paul. This writer believes that creating awareness is the first step in preparing the laity for the work of the ministry.

Much of the emphasis on these sessions centered on leadership and spiritual gifts, seeking to foster a conscious understanding that the believers already possess every gift necessary to do the work of the church, and that Christian leaders lead in doing. A two-fold approach was developed: one, for all members of St. Paul is to become aware of, and sensitive to, those gifts and be willing to ‘step out on faith’ in the application of those gifts, and two, for believers to re-interpret leadership as service to others instead of power over others.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 9.

Using the work of Patricia Brown (SpiritGifts) and Bruce Bugbee (Network) as a guideline, the writer began the Spiritual Gifts project in March of 2012, with a one-hour foundation session on the crucial relationship of individual members to each other in order to comprise the body of Christ (the church). Each member is crucial to the functioning of the church, and if there are not many members to begin with, the role of each member becomes that much more important.

This was followed by four one-hour Responsive Listening Bible Study sessions in April and May of 2012. Due to uneven attendance (there were three evenings when no one attended) what could have been accomplished in one month took two. It was during this time—especially when no one attended—that the researcher was tempted to question the participants' commitment to the project. This led the researcher to pray that God would teach him to forgive when others do not meet his expectations, and to continue to be an encouragement and resist the temptation to become disappointed or resentful.

Following the first session, the writer changed the focus of the sessions from leadership training to spiritual gifts discovery and implementation, using the SpiritGifts model developed by Dr. Patricia Brown, and Bruce Bugbee's NETWORK model as background material in preparing for the sessions. (Since that time, the church has begun seek to discover and apply their spiritual gifts. However, it will involve an extended implementation process, as the church will need to acclimate itself to a gifts-based model.)

During this time, the researcher preached a series of sermons as a way of raising consciousness about spiritual gifts and uniting the church with the overall concept of gifts-based ministry in the church, and the obedience to the Holy Spirit in discovering one's spiritual gifts.

In March 2012, the Context Associates of St. Paul were invited to participate in the project and given a brief overview on the specifics of their involvement. Each agreed to take part and have been cooperative throughout the process. Each participant was given an initial survey concerning spiritual gifts and leadership from a Christian perspective. After completion of the sessions on spiritual gifts, a spiritual gifts assessment was administered to determine in what areas they were gifted. They were also given a questionnaire with twenty questions to determine their feelings about spiritual gifts and their opinions about the role and significance of gifts in the local church.

The researcher conducted the sessions, using several handouts on biblical references to spiritual gifts and other resources. The tone of the sessions was polite and gentle; all in all, the sessions were informative and participants were moderately enthusiastic. It was difficult to gauge the overall success, because not all participants were able to attend every session. Those who were in attendance seemed pleased at having made it and they showed signs of understanding. It should be noted, however, that this researcher had a feeling some were there "because Pastor asked" and they did not wish to disappoint him. That feeling was overshadowed, though, as others who expressed genuine interest showed increasing enthusiasm for the classes.

## Collection of Data

The data used in this project included the findings of the initial survey, the spiritual gifts assessment, the spiritual gifts questionnaire and one-on-one interviews. Interestingly enough, what was most revealing were the responses on the questionnaire, which were handed out to the participants as a post-test after the project was completed.

They proved more revealing than the post-test one-on-one interviews, perhaps because participants may have felt more at ease in providing honest answers on paper than face to face. It was interesting to note that those who expressed the greatest level of interest in the training were those who have proven through the years to be the most faithful in serving in the church. However, they were also the ones who admitted (on paper) that a church the size of theirs does not have the luxury of expecting people to serve only out of their area of giftedness.

They maintained a very practical approach to ministry: When things needed to get done, somebody has to step in and do them; at that point, it is not a matter of who is or is not gifted in that area—the key is just to do it. It is in this area that the information from the questionnaires provided insight that no session time or interview would reveal.

First, the initial gifts/leadership survey was administered to all of the participants. At the end of the assessment, participants were given a personalized report describing the meaning of their top three spiritual gifts and how they can be used in the church today.

Third, following the initial spiritual gifts discovery session, a series of workshops was offered, entitled “You Can Open your Gifts Now.”

The workshops were designed to foster an awareness and understanding of the benefits of implementing a gifts-based model in the church. Although there were only four sessions, less than half of the participants completed all four sessions.

However, no matter who was or was not there, the mood was always friendly and light among participants, and there were always at least a couple of cherished moments during the sessions where it was apparent that the participants “got it.”

Fourth, the participants took a Spiritual Gifts Questionnaire, to express their opinions and feelings about how gifts of the Spirit can be utilized in the church. Finally, to gain a better understanding of participants’ reactions to the process, the pastor conducted one-on-one interviews.

### Analysis of Data

Participants expressed a genuine willingness to assist in the project and to cooperate with each of the steps. However, the initial written surveys were instrumental in revealing the congregation’s understanding of spiritual gifts in relation to servant-leadership. Following is an overview of the survey. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix B.

- Question one asked if respondents were presently involved in any organizations/ministries of the church. This researcher was pleasantly surprised to learn that they majority of those responding were in fact participating in the organizations/ministries of the church, with 55% working/serving in some form of ministry, compared to 45% who responded no.



One respondent serves in the Music Ministry, four on the Steward Board, one on the Stewardess Board, three in the Missionary Society, one Lay Organization, and one in the Young People's Department of the Women's Missionary Society.

- Question two asked if respondents were prepared to serve in a leadership position at St. Paul. The overwhelming majority responded affirmatively, with 30% strongly agreeing, 55% agreeing, and only 15% disagreeing with the statement. The researcher now realizes this may be a poorly worded question, due to the possible influence of one's self-image on impartially answering to the question. For if 85% of respondents agreed that they were prepared for leadership in the local church, and in fact only 55% of the same sample of respondents are actually active in the organizations/ministries of the church, the disparity of 30% is cause for concern.
- Question three asked respondents to define "servant-leadership". This was an open-ended question, designed to elicit respondent's ideas of what they see as a "servant-leader". Four replied they did not know; one thought the term did not apply to her and responded "N/A"; the remaining responses varied from 'role model', 'worker', and 'giving encouragement', which indicate a requirement to actually do something beyond attending worship.

The majority of respondents (five), replied 'servants of God', which indicates to this researcher there are members who see their service as not unto the denomination, or the pastor, but as service to God.

- Questions four sought to assess respondent's self-awareness of their spiritual gift(s). The answers reflected various levels of knowledge of gifts; eleven persons listed prayer, evangelism, administration, exhortation, communication, faith and

hospitality as their gifts. Seven knew about spiritual gifts but did not know theirs; two did not know about spiritual gifts; and one person indicated they knew they had a gift, but did not list it.

- Question five sought to assess respondent's knowledge of biblical examples of individuals who were called by God to lead others. Almost half (nine) of the respondents were not able to cite a specific example. The remaining eleven listed Paul, Joseph, Abraham, Timothy, Moses, among others. This information allowed the researcher to draw parallels in the lives of those ordinary men and women whom God empowers to do the great deeds recorded in the Bible.
- Question six attempted to explore respondents' views on the difference being a disciple, a follower who desires to live by Godly principles, and a Christian leader, who seeks not only to be a disciple, but to encourage others to become disciples as well. The responses gave valuable insight on how the participants viewed the difference, with the responses falling into three general categories; in discipleship, the responses could be categorized as adherence to God's word, actively participating, serving, obedience, believing, and willing to be taught.

The responses for Christian leadership demonstrated an understanding of the need to 'do more' than just believe: with adjectives such as: directing, leading others to Christ (this writer submits that evangelism is a form of Christian leadership), leading the faithful (which this writer understands in context of worship), and wise counsel being used.

However, there were six respondents who did not know the difference.

- Question seven sought to elicit the respondents self-assessment of their openness to the training, either admitting there was something they did not know, or

believing they already knew what they needed to know. Nine respondents indicated they did not know what they needed to know about servant-leadership, yet the other responses were similar. Of interest were responses such as: “How not to get in the way of God”, “when, where, how”, and “how to grow in faith”. Overall, the participants were interested and willing to learn.

After the training sessions, a spiritual gifts questionnaire was administered to the researcher’s ten Context Associates. Following is an overview of the rationale behind the survey. A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix F.

- Question one: respondents were asked to name their spiritual gifts. There was a wide variety of gifts, yet in an attempt to quantify those gifts, highest scoring areas were used: two had the gift of faith; two had mercy; and three had the gift of organization/administration, three the gift of wisdom.
- Question two asked whether respondents were actively using their gifts. All but one responded affirmatively.
- Question three queried respondents about the importance of using spiritual gifts. All agreed that gifts were an important factor in determining where and how a member should serve.
- In hindsight question four proved to be poorly worded, but it uncovered some interesting attitudes concerning spiritual gifts. The question stated: “Are there times when spiritual gifts should not be a factor in determining when and where a member should serve?” The question was intended to give respondents an opportunity to affirm that gifts should always be a qualification for service.

However, all but one stated that there are times when gifts are not a factor.

The following explanations were given: the practicality of filling a need, the recognition that the gift may not be available, and when the person is filling in on a temporary basis.

- Question five elicited responses to the question of whether factors other than gifts of the spirit were key in determining where a person should serve. The list included passion, interest, education, life experiences, sense of calling, need, desire, availability, capability, skills, profession, commitment, loyalty, reliability, knowledge, and talents. Only one respondent ranked spiritual gifts as the best determinant, after offering six other factors. One respondent noted the personal history of the member should also be taken into account
- Question six and seven asked respondents whether they thought members of the church at large were serving within their area of giftedness or out of need. Six of them responded members are serving out of a combination of giftedness/need, two said out of need, one said out of giftedness, and one said no, which indicates they may have misread the question.
- Question seven referred to the difference between gifts and natural talents or abilities. There was a marked difference of opinion, three respondents answered yes there is a difference; All but one understood the difference between the two, although there was some diversity related to the function of gifts.
- Question eight asked whether it was ever appropriate for a member to serve outside of the member's area of giftedness. Again, the emphasis on the unique needs of a small church surfaced here. All but two respondents said that there

were certain times when it was acceptable to serve outside of one's area of giftedness. One respondent was unsure, and the other said no.

- Question nine, ten, eleven, and twelve referred to the individuals' use of their gifts. Were they using all of their gifts? How comfortable were they in serving where they were serving? Did they feel equipped to serve? Was anything hindering their service? Two respondents said they were using all of their gifts; three said they were unsure. Three respondents said they are not comfortable serving where they are serving but they did it because the need was great; two expressed comfort. Two respondents noted that they did not feel equipped to serve in their area of giftedness; however, the responses they gave indicated some confusion.

One said it was because she did not have a computer; another said it was because she did not feel like a leader (although she did not have the gift of leadership); and another stated she did not have the knowledge to do the job she was doing. In terms of being feeling hindered from using gifts, three people stated that family commitments, two cited comfort level in a leadership role, and illness are hindrances in their lives right now.

### Training Model Outcomes

Although participants responded favorably to discovering gifts and how they could/should work in the church, and although they were cooperative in participating in the project, the questionnaire and the interviews indicate that there is little confidence in whether a small church is capable of operating fully within a spiritual gifts-based model. Experience over the last eight years of this writer's pastorate has proven that the needs of the church often override other factors, including gifts. There is even still some reticence regarding the effectiveness of spiritual gifts, when it comes to acknowledging when a person has a genuine gift to perform a position.

Perhaps questions eighteen and nineteen are the most revealing of all the responses. Eighteen presents a vision of a church that is fully gifts operational. All respondents strongly agree that it is the best model. However, question nineteen relates to the whether using spiritual gifts is a matter of personal choice, and the responses ran the gamut, nearly equally balanced from totally disagree to totally agree.

This disparity may be from a lack of willingness to serve in one's gifted area unless one chooses to do so, or a desire to allow persons the option not to serve. Although more interviews would be necessary to accurately discern the meaning of their responses, one might surmise that they wanted an opportunity to express their own free will, after serving for an extended period.

This was a good learning experience for the writer, because the writer recognized that more thought could have been put into the preparation phrase of the design of the questions with respect to the targeted audience.

This was revealed after the questions had been designed and the program implemented. This writer was cognizant of this situation for the duration of the process. The writer also noticed there were several common threads that continued to run throughout the training. The participants were very eager to embrace new ideas, but more especially, they exhibited a new awareness and desire to change direction and take the steps necessary to strive for excellence in the use of their gifts. This was evident through the dialogue for more involvement with the ministries. There were also discussions among the participants about the possibility of broadening the scope of such training throughout the church.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION**

#### **Reflection**

Overall, the spiritual gifts training proved successful. All who participated contributed to the sessions, and each member was a full participant. The group dynamics were positive, members were given opportunities to provide their perspectives, and the group learned through the sharing. After the sessions the participants were asked to provide feedback, and the comments were positive. Most of the participants appreciated what they learned about themselves, their gifts, and looked forward to further opportunities for spiritual growth.

#### **Summary**

The goal of the spiritual gifts project is to create a church environment that seeks to maximize the gifted potential of each member, to increase the effectiveness of the local church, and to fulfill God's design for the church as the body of Christ. To create lay leaders, the church needs a biblically based, theologically sound training model that would not only train future leaders, but engage them in a program of spiritual formation



and development that would give them the tools to assist in the process of individual spiritual discovery and growth.

This would in turn produce lay members who would not only serve as directed by their gifts, but would seek opportunities to improve how the church serves the members of the local faith community and the community outside the church.

The objective of this training is to create transformative learning within the lay leadership of St. Paul AMEC, to enable them to use the spiritual disciplines of prayer, biblical study, and faith development to become better servant-leaders.

Four sessions coupled with a sermon series were used in this training project. These sessions introduced the participants to the spiritual discipline of prayer, the biblical foundation of spiritual gifts in the New Testament, discovering and assessing one's spiritual gifts, and aligning those gifts with opportunities for service at St. Paul. During the final session the Context Associates completed a quantitative spiritual gifts assessment, with the data used for analysis. Participant interaction during the sessions, qualitative, and quantitative assessment were used in the evaluation of the training project.

The training revealed a variety of attitudes towards spiritual gifts, especially toward the more 'spectacular' gifts (i.e. the gift of tongues), which many, (including this writer) have reservations as to its present-day manifestation in the church. However, the training was well received and did provide the participants with awareness of God's intention for the church through spiritual gifts, the opportunity to share those gifts with others in a supportive and encouraging environment, to meet the needs of those in the church and to be more effective outside the church. The training provided leaders with

the tools necessary for spiritual growth, and helped to enhance their effectiveness as leaders in the church.

There were other factors that had a direct impact on the development of this project, limiting the scope of this research. The researcher's continuing duties as pastor, implementing the program while continuing to work full-time in secular employment, and continuing the role of husband and father all were factors in designing a project that would not only meet the requirements for graduation, but serve to have a real and positive impact on the lives of those in the local church. In order to meet these additional commitments, the project design was modified to four sessions, beginning with a Saturday meeting, with subsequent sessions held Friday evening. The participants saw Friday as a time when the duties of the week were completed, the kids did not have school the next day, et cetera.

Modifications were made in order to facilitate accomplishing the goal with limited time and financial resources available; the sessions on leadership training were shortened to one session in the beginning; the personality traits assessment and leadership styles sections were omitted in favor of a dual approach of spiritual gifts identification and assessment, coupled with the sessions on spiritual formation and discernment, that would allow the participants to continue the process after the training ended.

Some context Associates were unable to participate in all four sessions because of work schedules, other commitments, or illness. Overall, however, the data analyses reflected members who supported their church and were eager to learn.

## Implementation

The project implementation went well. Although some of the sessions failed to begin promptly at 7 p.m., many of the participants remained past the allotted time for further discussion and interaction with other members. All four of the training sessions were held in the sanctuary and there was pleasant fellowship. The members were animated and lively and their interactions with each other and in the small group sessions there was a feeling of accomplishment when each team made its report. At the conclusion of the final session, the participants reflected on the Responsive Listening Bible Study with favorable comments, and expressed a desire to conduct the weekly Bible Study in a similar format.

**Initial Session:** The project began when the researcher's Presiding Elder was unable to attend the quarterly conference scheduled for the month of March. This researcher, not wanting to miss the opportunity to use this time productively, spoke with the congregation concerning an overview of Paul's analogy of the church as a body. This allow the researcher to underscore the importance of each part of the body, in order for the body to properly function every part of the body must function, and Paul's underlying rationale for using that particular analogy. At the end of this impromptu session, the participants shared with one another how they see themselves in that body.

**Session 1:** The primary objectives of session 1 were to: introduce the participants to the project model, establish the participants' role in the transformative learning process, introduce materials used in the project, allow the participants to form small learning groups, and to acquaint themselves with the team learning process.

The group discussed the biblical foundations of spiritual gifts using 1 Cor. 12:14-27 as a model for the discussion. The group discussion developed an understanding of the concept of leader as servant in and of the body of Christ in the context of the local church, and performed a detailed analysis of how particular attributes of the body would contribute to the overall effectiveness of the church. At the end of the session, the participants' expectations were reviewed to ensure they were met prior to ending the session.

Session 2: the objectives for this session were to provide the participants with biblical foundations for understanding spiritual gifts and the importance of those gifts in the communal life of the church. The Scripture model used for the session was Rom. 12:3-8, which stressed the interconnected relationship of spiritual gifts among believers, using the analogy of the human body. At this time the participants were also given an opportunity to complete an initial survey on their opinions and attitudes concerning gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Session 3: the objective for this session was to converse about the nature and source of spiritual gifts, using Eph. 4:7-16 as a model. The discussion centered on verse seven "but to each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift."<sup>1</sup>

The participants then engaged in a discussion concerning the nature of God's grace, which results in gifting various persons for building up the entire church.

This discussion developed an appreciation for diversity of spiritual gifts, and an acceptance of 'lesser' gifts. The participants discussed what it would take for the church to come into the unity of faith through spiritual gifts, and they were urged to support one another and discerning and discussing their gifts.

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. 4:7.

Session 4: in this session the participants discussed the mutual responsibilities that believers have toward each other, using one Pet. 5:9-10 as a model. The conversation centered around the concept presented in verse ten, and the participants became really engaged in the concept of discovering what their gifts were, because the passage says everyone has receive some form of gift. At the end of this session the participants shared their observations on the training, and how the training has affected their perception of their spiritual gifts.

### **Evaluation**

Project evaluation consisted of an initial survey consisting of seven questions. This pre-implementation data gathered information pertaining to individual views on spiritual gifts and servant leadership. This data gave the researcher information relating to their particular knowledge level prior to any training.

The project evaluation concluded with a spiritual gifts questionnaire consisting of nineteen questions that the researcher believes accurately measured an increase in the perception and understanding of spiritual gifts in the local church, coupled with a more informed opinion on the role of spiritual gifts in the local church.

Since there were some participants who did not attend all sessions this researcher was constrained to use what data he could gather in order to present the most complete results possible. One noticeable observation on the outcome of the project was an increased acceptance and awareness of the participants' spiritual gifts. Many observed the change in their attitudes towards spiritual gifts and their relation to achieving the mission

of the church. In individual telephone interviews participants responded that they appreciated participating in the training, and believe they will be better disciples and better servants of God.

### *Recommendations*

With some modifications, the project “Developing Lay Leadership through the identification and assessment of spiritual gifts” can be replicated for use in other churches. It should be noted that the project should be designed to fit the particular context where the training will take place. Sufficient facilities should be provided the comfort of the participants and to aid in concentration on the material presented. If possible, separate breakout areas should be provided to facilitate teambuilding and group learning goals, and to improve cohesion between members.

Although not utilized in this project a leadership assessment instrument may be added to provide more information and insight to the participants in the development of their servant leadership style. A diagnostic assessment could be used to analyze the personality of individuals and provide more in-depth information on how to effectively utilize their spiritual gifts in a leadership capacity.

In an expanded program, studies on servant leaders such as Moses, Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph, would serve well in highlighting God's partnership with servant leaders to empower them to make a positive difference in the community.

In order to tailor this project for use in other contexts this researchers suggest the following format:

1. Project objectives: the goal of the project should be stated clearly in the initial session. The objectives of the project should be aligned with the vision and mission statements of the church. This will ensure a consensus of understanding by all participants.
2. Session objectives: each session should have an identifiable Scripture reference and build on the work performed in the previous session.
3. Action steps: each session should contain identifiable learning actions that participants may engage in between sessions.
4. Reflection: sufficient time should be factored into each session adequate reflection and communication of issues within the project/session.

### **Conclusion**

This project offers a methodical systematic approach in creating awareness of spiritual gifts, and engaging a congregation in serious dialogue concerning spiritual. The Bible records that gifts were given to everyone, and the church is better served by leaders who understand that even the so-called small gifts such as hospitality are just as valuable as prophecy or preaching.

Once an environment conducive to the open discussion of spiritual gifts is created, the participants should be encouraged to share their insights concerning their gifts, gifts they discern in others, and be taken seriously by the session facilitator.

Care must be taken when discussing spiritual gifts to avoid sensationalism concerning spiritual gifts or rejection of spiritual gifts based on ignorance or uninformed persons.

With the participation of the congregation, an effective gifts-based leadership program can be developed in the local church. Effective lay leadership in today's society is proactive, relational, intentional, spiritual, opened to change, and focused on holistically meeting the needs of people.

The church should share the responsibility, authority, and accountability with every level of leadership, both clergy and laity, in whatever formal or informal capacity they serve, rather than one or two individuals shouldering the burden. Effective lay leadership should work with clergy leadership and should be shared among the multiple gifts that complement each other. Each active member of the church should be involved in their gifted area of service and support others in other areas of service. This allows one to build on the others' strengths and, from the perspective of the congregation present a unified front in service to the Lord.

To successfully implement spiritual gifts training, it is important that the leader/facilitator be spiritually mature, motivated, dedicated to the cause of Christ, and focused on the spiritual growth and development of each participant. One of the benefits of implementing a gifts-based ministry model at St. Paul has been an increase in the confidence of the officers as they perform their leadership roles. There has been an increase in participation during the official board meetings, with members who were heretofore silent during discussions, now actively contributing to the matter at hand.



There has also been a marked increase in members who have accepted positions of leadership at St. Paul, due to discovering their spiritual gifts during the assessments. This encourages the researcher to continue a gifts-based service-training model beyond the scope of the original project, into a sustained program for the entire congregation, with a focus on new members,

It is this researchers hope that through spiritual gifts training, awareness and acceptance of spiritual gifts among members of the local church in the present day may be fostered, and members will develop a biblically based, theologically sound, informed conception of spiritual gifts, that will facilitate involvement in the ministries of the church.

It must be stated however, there are no simple answers to the question of developing lay leadership. The information presented in this project is based on limited time (five sessions with one-to-one interviews with select persons) and limited availability of those involved in the project. The quantitative analysis could be further developed to produce a more detailed database. At the discretion of the writer, it was decided to limit the learning to creating awareness in fostering an atmosphere that leads to further investigation individually. Qualitatively, more intentional and relevant questions could ultimately lead to better results. Nonetheless, the writer considers any discussion/training that leads to God's people becoming more effective in God's service to be of value.

The ultimate goal of this training, in helping members discover their spiritual gifts, is that they would in turn use their gifts to help others discover their gifts, to, as Paul said “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Eph. 4:12-15.

**APPENDIX A**  
THE SAINT PAUL VISION

## The Vision

[Ephesians 4:11-13]

St. Paul is:

A place where those who are hurting, frustrated, confused, oppressed, and depressed can come to find love, acceptance, understanding, help, hope, guidance, and encouragement.

People reaching spiritual maturity through Bible studies, small groups, seminars, retreats, and Sunday school.

A congregation in which each member is a minister who is Chris- centered, Bible-based, ministry-driven, mission-minded, staff-lead, and spirit-directed.

Anointed and innovative Christian worship that unites high praise with the rich traditions of our African Methodist heritage, realistically and creatively engaging in spiritual development to become God's "liberating and reconciling people."

Empowering every member for their personal life mission in the world and of a church that gives sustained support those in need.

Form and substance to the motto of the African Methodist Episcopal Church: "God our Father, Christ our Redeemer, and humankind one family."

I am confident that St. Paul will make the vision reality. Why? Because they are the inspired and revealed will of God for all people.

*Rev. Hugh K Wesley*

*Senior Pastor*

**APPENDIX B**  
INITIAL CHURCH SURVEY

Thank you for participation in the Leadership Project! To assess your understanding of leadership and spiritual gifts, please take a moment to complete the following questionnaire. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you presently involved in some form of participation in the organizations/ministries of St. Paul? (e.g. Steward Board, Trustee Board, etc.)  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
 If yes, what do you do?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. To what extent do you agree with this statement: "I am prepared to serve in a leadership position at St. Paul"?

Strongly  
Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly  
Disagree

3. How would you define the term "Servant leadership"? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

4. If someone were to ask you what your "spiritual gift" from God is, you would say,

(Check One)

\_\_\_\_\_ "What are spiritual gifts?"

\_\_\_\_\_ "I know what spiritual gifts are, but I don't know what mine are."

\_\_\_\_\_ "My spiritual gift(s) is (are):  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Can you give two examples of "spirit-led" (where someone exercised God empowered and directed) leadership in the Bible, other than Jesus?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

6. How is Christian "discipleship" different from Christian "leadership", if at all?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

7. Please complete the following statement: What I really need to know about "Servant Leadership" is:

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**APPENDIX C**  
**SPIRITUAL GIFTS ASSESSMENT**



## S p i r i t u a l   G i f t s   S u r v e y

### Step 1 - Complete The Spiritual Gift Survey

Go through the list of 125 statements on the questionnaire. For each one, mark to what extent the statement is true of your own life:

Warning! Do not score according to what you think should be true, would like to be true, or according to what you hope will be true in the future. The apostle Paul says in Romans 12:3 that no one should think of himself or herself "more highly than he or she ought to think; but to think soberly. . ." So be honest, and score yourself on the basis of your past experiences.

1. I have a desire to speak direct messages from God that edify, exhort, or comfort other  
☐ 3-Much                      ☐ 2-Some                      ☐ 1-Little                      ☐ 0-Not at all
  
2. I have enjoyed relating to a certain group of people over a long period of time, sharing personally in their successes and their failures.  
☐ 3-Much                      ☐ 2-Some                      ☐ 1-Little                      ☐ 0-Not at all
  
3. People have told me that I have helped them learn Biblical truths in a meaningful way.  
☐ 3-Much                      ☐ 2-Some                      ☐ 1-Little                      ☐ 0-Not at all
  
4. I have applied spiritual truth effectively to situations in my own life.  
☐ 3-Much                      ☐ 2-Some                      ☐ 1-Little                      ☐ 0-Not at all
  
5. Others have told me I have helped them distinguish key and important facts of Scripture.  
☐ 3-Much                      ☐ 2-Some                      ☐ 1-Little                      ☐ 0-Not at all
  
6. I have verbally encouraged the wavering, troubled, or discouraged.  
☐ 3-Much                      ☐ 2-Some                      ☐ 1-Little                      ☐ 0-Not at all

7. Others in the church have noted that I was able to see through phoniness before it was evident to other people.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

8. I find I manage money well in order to give liberally to the Lord's work.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

9. I have assisted Christian leaders to relieve them for their essential job.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

10. I have a desire to work with those who have physical or mental problems, to alleviate their suffering.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

11. I feel comfortable relating to ethnic and minority groups, and they seem to accept me.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

12. I have led others to a decision for salvation through faith in Christ.

- ☐
- 3-Much
- ☐
- 2-Some
- ☐
- 1-Little
- ☐
- 0-Not at all

13. My home is always open to people passing through who need a place to stay.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

14. When in a group, I am the one other often look to for vision and direction.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

15. When I speak, people seem to listen and agree.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

16. When in a group that is lacking organization, I tend to step in to fill the gap.

- ☐
- 3-Much
- ☐
- 2-Some
- ☐
- 1-Little
- ☐
- 0-Not at all

17. Other can point to specific instances where my prayers have resulted in visible miracles.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

18. In the name of the Lord, I have been used in curing diseases instantaneously.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

19. I have spoken in tongues.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

20. Sometimes when a person speaks in tongues, I get an idea about what God is saying.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

21. I could live more comfortably, but I choose not to in order to live with the poor.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

22. I am single and enjoy it.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

23. I spend at least an hour a day in prayer.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

24. I have spoken to evil spirits and they have obeyed me.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

25. I enjoy being called upon to do special jobs around the church.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

26. Through God, I have revealed specific things, which will happen in the future.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

27. I have enjoyed assuming the responsibility for the spiritual well-being of a particular group of Christians.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

28. I feel I can explain the New Testament teaching about the health and ministry of the body of Christ in a relevant way.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

29. I can intuitively arrive at solutions to fairly complicated problems.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

30. I have insights of spiritual truth that others have said helped bring them closer to God.

☐ 3-Much                      ☐ 2-Some                      ☐ 1-Little                      ☐ 0-Not at all

31. I can effectively motivate people to get involved in ministry when it is needed.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

32. I can "see" the Spirit of God resting on certain people from time to time.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

33. My giving records show that I give considerably more than 10 percent of my income to the Lord's work.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

34. Other people have told me that I have helped them become more effective in their ministries.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

35. I have cared for others when they have had material or physical needs.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

36. I feel I could learn another language well in order to minister to those is a different language.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

37. I have shared joyfully how Christ has brought me to Himself in a way that is meaningful to non-believers.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

38. I enjoy taking charge of church suppers or social events.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

39. I have believed God for the impossible and seen it happen in a tangible way.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

40. Other Christians have followed my leadership because they believed in me.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

41. I enjoy handling the details of organizing ideas, people, resources and time for a more effective ministry.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

56. People have come to me in their afflictions or suffering, and told me that I have helped, relieved and /or healed.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

57. I can tell with a fairly high degree of assurance when an evil spirit afflicts a person.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

58. When I am moved by an appeal to God's work, I usually can find the money I need to do it.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

59. I have enjoyed doing routine tasks that led to more effective ministry by others.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

60. I enjoy visiting in hospitals and /or retirement homes and feel I do well in such a ministry.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

61. People of a different race or culture have gravitated to me and we have related well.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

62. Non-Christians have noted that they feel comfortable when they are around me, and that I have a positive effect on them toward developing a faith in Christ.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

63. When people come to my home, they indicate that they "feel at home."

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

64. Other people have told me that I had faith to accomplish what seemed impossible to them.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

65. When I set goals, others seem to accept them readily.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

66. I have been able to make effective plans for accomplishing the goals of a group.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

67. God regularly seems to do impossible things through my life.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

68. Others have told me that God healed them of an emotional problem when I ministered to them.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

69. I can speak to God in a language I have never learned.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

70. I can interpret if someone begins speaking in tongues.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

71. I am not poor, but I can identify with poor people.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

72. I am glad I have more time to serve the Lord because I am single.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

73. Intercessory prayer is one of my favorite ways of spending time.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

74. Others call on me when they suspect that someone is demonized.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

75. Others have mentioned that I seem to enjoy routine tasks and do well at them.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

76. I sometimes have a strong sense of what God wants to say to people in response to a particular situation.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

77. I have helped fellow believers by guiding them to relevant portions of the bible and praying with them.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

78. I feel I can communicate Biblical truths to others and see resulting changes in knowledge, attitudes, values or conduct.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

79. Some believers indicate that I have perceived and applied biblical truth to their specific needs.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

80. I study and read quite a bit in order to learn new Biblical truths.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

81. I have a desire to effectively counsel the perplexed, the guilty or the addicted.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all



82. I can recognize whether a person's teaching is from God, from Satan or of human origin.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

83. I am so confident that God will meet my needs that I give to Him sacrificially and consistently.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

84. When I do things behind the scenes and others are helped, I am joyful.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

85. People can call on me to help those who are less fortunate.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

86. I would be willing to leave comfortable surroundings if it would enable me to share Christ with more people.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

87. I get frustrated when others don't share their faith with unbelievers as much as I do.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

88. Others have mentioned to me that I am very hospitable person.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

89. There have been times when I have felt sure I knew God's specific will for the future growth of His church, even when others have not been so sure.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

90. When I joined a group, others seem to back off and expect me to take the leadership.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

91. I am able to give directions to others without using persuasion to get them to accomplish a task.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

92. People have told me that I was God's instrument that brought supernatural change in lives or circumstances.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

93. I have prayed for others and physical healing has actually occurred.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

94. When I give a public message in tongues in a way that seemed to bless others.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

95. I have interpreted tongues in a way that seemed to bless others.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

96. Others tell me I sacrificed much materially to minister.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

97. I am single and have little difficulty controlling my sexual desires.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

98. Others have told me that my prayers for them have been answered in tangible ways.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

99. Others people have been instantly delivered from demonic oppression when I have prayed.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

100. I prefer being active and doing something rather than just sitting around talking, or reading or listening to a speaker.

- ☐
- 3-Much
- ☐
- 2-Some
- ☐
- 1-Little
- ☐
- 0-Not at all

101. I sometimes feel that I know exactly what God wants to do in ministry at a specific point in time.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

102. People have told me that I have helped them be restored to the Christian community.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

103. Studying the bible and sharing insights with others is very satisfying for me.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

104. I have felt an unusual presence of God and personal confidence when important decisions needed to be made.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

105. I have the ability to discover new truths for myself through reading or observing situations.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

106. I have urged others to seek a Biblical solution to their affliction or suffering.

- ☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

107. I can tell whether a person is speaking in tongues is genuine.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

108. I have been willing to maintain a lower standard of living in order to benefit God's work.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

I09. When I serve the Lord, I really don't care who gets the credit.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

110. I would enjoy spending time with a lonely, shut-in person or someone in prison.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

111. More than most, I have had a strong desire to see people of other countries won to the Lord.

☐ 3-Much                      ☐ 2-Some                      ☐ 1-Little                      ☐ 0-Not at all

112. I am attracted to non-believers because of my desire to win them to Christ.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

113.I have desired to make my home available to those in the Lord's service whenever needed. ☐ 3-Much ☐ 2-Some ☐ 1-Little ☐ 0-Not at all

114. Others have told me that I am a person of unusual vision, and I agree.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

115. When I am in charge, thing seem to run smoothly.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

116. I have enjoyed bearing the responsibility for the success of a particular task within my church.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

117. In the name of the Lord, I have been able to recover sight to the blind.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

118. When I pray for the sick, either they or I feel sensations of tingling or warmth.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

119. When I speak in tongues, I believe it is edifying to the Lord's body.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

120. I have interpreted tongues in such a way that the message appeared to be directly from God.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

121. Poor people accept me because I choose to live on their level.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

122. I readily identify with Paul's desire for others to be single as he was.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

123. When I pray, God frequently speaks to me and I recognize his voice.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

124. I cast out demons in Jesus' name.

☐ 3-Much      ☐ 2-Some      ☐ 1-Little      ☐ 0-Not at all

125. I respond cheerfully when asked to do a job, even if it seems menial or unimportant.

☐ 3-Much

☐ 2-Some

☐ 1-Little

☐ 0-Not at all

### Spiritual Gifts Answer Sheet

In the grid below, enter the numerical value of each of your responses next to the number of corresponding statement from Step 1.

MUCH=3      SOME=2      LITTLE=1      NOT AT ALL=0

Then add up the five numbers that you have recorded in each row and place the sum in the "Total column.

ROWS		VALUE OF ANSWERS				TOTAL		GIFT			
A	1		26		51		76		101		Prophecy
B	2		27		52		77		102		Pastor
C	3		28		53		78		103		Teaching
D	4		29		54		79		104		Wisdom
E	5		30		55		80		105		Knowledge
F	6		31		56		81		106		Exhortation
G	7		32		57		82		107		Discerning of
H	8		33		58		83		108		Giving
I	9		34		59		84		109		Help
J	10		35		60		85		110		Mercy
K	11		36		61		86		111		Missionary
L	12		37		62		87		112		Evangelist
M	13		38		63		88		113		Hospitality
N	14		39		64		89		114		Faith
O	15		40		65		90		115		Leadership
P	16		41		66		91		116		Administration
Q	17		42		67		92		117		Miracles
R	18		43		68		93		118		Healing
S	19		44		69		94		119		Tongues
T	20		45		70		95		120		Interpretation
U	21		46		71		96		121		Voluntary
V	22		47		72		97		122		Celibacy
W	23		48		73		98		123		Intercession
X	24		49		74		99		124		Exorcism
Y	25		50		75		100		125		Service

Note: The capital letters before the gift definitions will correspond to the session titled in the descriptions of Spiritual Gifts.

**APPENDIX D**  
**SPIRITUAL GIFTS STUDY SESSIONS**



## SESSION OUTLINE

- PRAYER
- SESSION OBJECTIVES
- SESSION EXPECTATIONS
- SCRIPTURE TEXT
- SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION
- GROUP DIALOG
- SUMMARY
- COLLECTIVE PRAYER

## WORKSHOP ONE

### Prayer

Begin with the injunction given by the apostle James: "...and pray one for another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective." (James 5:16b)

### Objective

To introduce the course objective, the Responsive Listening Bible Study format, and to organize study groups.

### Expectations

Group cohesion; trust development; and participation in group discussion

### Discussion Questions

- A. Why did Paul compare the church to a human body?
- B. In what ways does the church resemble a body?
- C. What part of the body are you?

### Biblical References

1 Corinthians 12 / Romans 12 / Ephesians 4 /

### Scripture Breakout Groups

### Group Reports

### Collective Prayer

## **APPENDIX E**

### **OPPORTUNITIES TO EXERCISE SPIRITUAL GIFTS AT ST. PAUL**

A. PROPHECY - "To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy..." 1 Corinthians 12:10

1. Evangelism and Discipleship Ministry
2. Prayer Ministry

B. PASTOR - " And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Jeremiah 3:15

1. Congregational Care & Community Outreach
2. Fish and Loaves Feeding
3. Clothes Closet
4. Physically Challenged Ministry
5. Prison Ministry
6. Substance Abuse Ministry
7. Sick and Shut-in Ministry
8. Transportation Ministry
9. HIV-Aids Ministry
10. Discipleship and Education
12. Commitment Counselor
13. New Member's Orientation
14. Sunday School Ministry
15. Christian Development Institute
16. Scholarship Commission
17. Tutorial Ministry
18. Evangelism and Communications Ministry
19. Street Evangelism
20. Door-to-Door Evangelism
21. In-House Evangelism
22. Target Evangelism
23. St. Paul Newsletter
24. Business Operations Ministry
25. Stewardship Ministry
26. Long Range Planning
27. Administration
28. Budget and Finance Ministry
29. Community and Economic Development
30. Weekend Receptionist

C. Teaching - "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." Matthew 28:19-20

1. Discipleship and Education Ministry
  - a) Commitment Counselor
  - b) New Member's Orientation
  - c) Sunday School Ministry
  - d) Christian Development Institute

- e) Tutorial Ministry
- 2. Evangelism and Communications Ministry
  - a) Street Evangelism
  - b) Door to Door Evangelism
  - c) In -House Evangelism
  - d) Target Evangelism
  - e) Radio Broadcast
  - f) Television Broadcast
  - g) Web-Site
  - h) Vision Magazine
  - i) Desktop Publishing
- D. Wisdom - "Happy is anyone that finds wisdom, and anyone that gets understanding" -Proverbs 3:13
  - 1. Business Operations Ministry
    - a) Long Range Planning
    - b) Community and Economic Development
  - 2. Discipleship and Education
    - a) Commitment Counselor
    - b) New Member's Orientation
    - c) Sunday School Ministry
    - d) Christian Development Institute
    - e) Scholarship Commission
    - f) Tutorial Ministry
  - 3. Evangelism and Communications Ministry
    - a) Street Evangelism
    - b) Door to Door Evangelism
    - c) In-House Evangelism
    - d) Target Evangelism
  - 4. Congregational Care & Community Outreach
    - a) Prison Ministry
    - b) Substance Abuse Ministry
    - c) Sick and shut-in Ministry
    - d) HIV- Aids Ministry
- E. Knowledge - "The wise lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction" Proverbs 10:14
  - 1. Discipleship and Education
    - a) Commitment Counselor
    - b) New Member's Orientation
    - c) Sunday School Ministry
    - d) Christian Development Institute
    - e) Librarian

- f) Scholarship Commission
- g) Tutorial Ministry

2. Evangelism and Communications Ministry

- a) Radio Broadcast
- b) Television Broadcast
- c) Web-Site
- d) St. Paul Newsletter
- e) Desktop Publishing

3. Business Operations Ministry

- a) Stewardship Ministry
- b) Long Range Planning
- c) Budget and Finance Ministry

F. Exhortation - "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." 1 Timothy 4:13

1. Praise and Worship Ministry

- a) Security and Parking Lot Ministry
- c) Usher's Ministry
- d) Audio-Visual Ministry
- e) Shekinah Youth Church
- f) Pastor's Aid Ministry

2. Music Ministry

- a) Women's Chorus
- b) Men's Chorus
- c) Praise Team(s)
- d) Teen Choir
- e) Children's Choir
- f) Praise Dancers
- g) Young Adult Choir
- h) Mime Dancers

3. Discipleship and Education

- a) Commitment Counselor
- b) New Member's Orientation

G. Discerning of Spirits - "To another the working of miracles; to another prophesy; to another discerning of spirits..." 1 Corinthians 12:10

1. Congregational Care & Community Outreach

- a) Prison Ministry
- b) Substance Abuse Ministry
- c) Sick and Shut-In Ministry
- d) Transportation Ministry
- e) HIV-Aids Ministry

2. Evangelism and Communications Ministry
    - a) Street Evangelism
    - b) Door to Door Evangelism
    - c) In-House Evangelism
    - d) Target Evangelism
  3. Discipleship and Education
    - a) Commitment Counselor
    - b) New Member's Orientation
    - c) Sunday School Ministry
    - d) Christian Development Institute
    - e) Librarian
    - f) Scholarship Commission
    - g) Tutorial Ministry
- H. Giving - "You should each give, then, as you have decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly." 2 Corinthians 9:7
1. Congregational Care & Community Outreach
    - a) Fish and Loaves Feeding
    - b) Clothes Closet
    - c) Physically Challenged Ministry
    - d) Prison Ministry
    - e) Substance Abuse Ministry
    - f) Sick and Shut-in Ministry
    - g) Transportation Ministry
    - h) HIV-Aids Ministry
- J. Mercy - "The merciful doeth good to his own soul; but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh." Proverbs 11:17
1. Congregational Care & Community Outreach
    - a) Fish and Loaves Feeding
    - b) Clothes Closet
    - c) Physically Challenged Ministry
    - d) Prison Ministry
    - e) Substance Abuse Ministry
    - f) Sick and Shut-in Ministry
    - g) Transportation Ministry
    - h) HIV-Aids Ministry
  2. Evangelism and Communications Ministry
    - a) Street Evangelism
    - b) Door to Door Evangelism
    - c) In-House Evangelism
- K. Missionary - "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them, they sent them away." Acts 13:2-3

1. Evangelism and Communications Ministry
    - a) Street Evangelism
    - b) Door to Door Evangelism
    - c) In-House Evangelism
    - d) Target evangelism
    - e) Radio Broadcast
    - f) Television Broadcast
    - g) Web-Site
    - h) Vision Magazine
    - i) Desktop Publishing
  2. Congregational Care & Community Outreach
    - a) Fish and Loaves Feeding
    - b) Clothes Closet
    - c) Physically Challenged Ministry
    - d) Prison Ministry
    - e) Substance Abuse Ministry
    - f) Sick and Shut-in Ministry
    - g) Transportation Ministry
    - h) HIV-Aids Ministry
- L. Evangelist - " And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelist... for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Ephesians 4:11
1. Evangelism and Communications Ministry
    - a) Street Evangelism
    - b) Door to Door Evangelism
    - c) In-House Evangelism
    - d) Target evangelism
    - e) Radio Broadcast
    - f) Television Broadcast
    - g) Web-Site
    - h) St. Paul Newsletter
    - i) Desktop Publishing
- M. Hospitality - "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." 1 Peter 4:9
1. Praise and Worship Ministry
    - a) Security and Parking Lot Ministry
    - b) Greeters Ministry
    - c) Usher's Ministry
    - d) Pastor's Aid Ministry
  2. Congregational Care & Community Outreach
    - a) Fish and Loaves Feeding
    - b) Clothes Closet
    - c) Physically Challenged Ministry
    - d) Prison Ministry
    - e) Substance Abuse Ministry
    - f) Sick and Shut-in Ministry



- g) Transportation Ministry
- h) HIV-Aids Ministry

3. Discipleship and Education

- a) Commitment Counselor
- b) New Member's Orientation
- c) Sunday School Ministry
- d) Christian Development Institute
- e) Scholarship Commission
- i) Tutorial Ministry

N. Faith - "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6

1. Discipleship and Education

- a) Commitment Counselor
- b) New Member's Orientation
- c) Sunday School Ministry
- d) Christian Development Institute
- e) Scholarship Commission
- f) Tutorial Ministry

2. Evangelism and Communications Ministry

- a) Street Evangelism
- b) Door to Door Evangelism

**APPENDIX F**  
**SPIRITUAL GIFTS QUESTIONNAIRE**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Spiritual Gifts project. Please answer each question to the best of your ability. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, only what you feel about spiritual gifts.

1. What is/are your spiritual gift(s)?

2. Are you using your spiritual gift(s) in St. Paul at this time?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not Sure

If so, please explain how. If not, please explain why.

3. Do you consider spiritual gifts an important factor in determining where and how a member should be of service in St. Paul?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not Sure

If not, please explain.

4. Are there times when spiritual gifts should not be a factor in determining where and how a member should serve?

5. What other factors, aside from spiritual gifts, should be used to determine when and where a member should serve?

6. Do you believe the officers and members of St. Paul are serving out of their area of giftedness or out of need?

7. Is there a difference between spiritual gifts and natural talents and abilities?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not Sure

If yes, how do they differ?

8. Is it ever acceptable for a member to serve outside of their area of giftedness?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not Sure

9. Do you believe you have spiritual gifts you have not yet put to use?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not Sure

10. Are you comfortable in the area(s) where you are serving?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not Sure

11. Do you feel you are adequately equipped to use your spiritual gifts?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not Sure

12. Do you think there is anything hindering you from using your spiritual gifts?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not sure

If yes, please elaborate.

Please respond to the following questions (*Circle one number for each response*).

**5 = strongly agree**

**4 = agree**

**3 = undecided**

**2 = disagree**

**1 = strongly disagree**

13. A person should be able to serve whenever and wherever they wish in the church.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

14. A person should not have to serve if they don't want to, even if they are gifted.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

15. Gifts are nice, but the small church needs people who are willing to fill the need when it arises.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

16. The church is a place where people ought to feel empowered to make a difference through their spiritual gifts.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

17. God placed people in St. Paul with specific gifts to fill every need of the church.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

18. The church is stronger and more unified when gifts of Spirit are united with the fruit of the Spirit, as defined in Galatians 5:22 (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control).

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

19. How and whether I express my spiritual gift(s) is a matter of personal choice.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

## **APPENDIX G**

### **BIBLICAL REFERENCES FOR SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

A. PROPHECY - The gift of prophecy is the special ability the God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to receive and communicate an immediate message of God to his people through a divinely anointed utterance

References: I Cor 12:10,28 Eph. 4:11-12 Romans 12:6 Luke 7:26 Acts 15:3 Acts 21:9-11.

B. PASTOR - The gift of pastor is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to assume long term personal responsibility for spiritual welfare of a group of believers.

References: Eph. 4:11-12 1 Timothy 3:1-7 John 10:1-18 1 Peter 5:1-3.

C. TEACHING - The gift of teaching is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to communicate relevant to the health and ministry of the body and its member in such a way that others will learn.

References: 1 Cor. 2:1-13 1 Cor. 12:8 Acts 6:3, 10 James 1:5-6 2 Peter 3:15-16.

D. WISDOM - The gift of wisdom is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to communicate information relevant to the health and ministry of the body and its members in such a way that others will learn.

References: 1 Cor. 2:14 1 Cor. 12:8 Acts 5:1-11 Col 2:2-32 Cor. 11:6.

E. KNOWLEDGE - The gift of knowledge is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to discover, accumulate, analyze and clarify information and ideas that are pertinent to the well-being of the body.

References: Romans 12:8 Timothy 4:13 Hebrews 10:25 Acts 14:22.

F. EXHORTATION - The gift of discerning spirits is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to minister words of comfort, consolation, encouragement and counsel to other members of the body of members of the body in such a way that they feel helped and healed.

References: I Cor. 12:10 Acts 5: 1-11 Acts 16: 16-18 1 John 4: 1-6 Matt. 16:21-23.

G. DISCERNING OF SPIRITS – The gift of discerning spirits is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to know with assurance whether certain behavior purported to be of God is in reality divine, human or satanic.

References: Romans 12:8 2 Cor. 8: 1-7 2 Cor. 9: 2-8 1 Cor. 12:28.

H. GIVING - The gift of giving is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to contribute their material resources to the work of the Lord with liberality and cheerfulness.

References: Romans 12:8 2 Cor. 8: 1-7 2 Cor. 9: 2-8 1 Cor. 12:28.

Y. SERVICE - The gift of service is the ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to identify the unmet needs involved in a task related to God's work, and to make use of available resource to meet those needs and help accomplish the desired results.

Scriptures: 2 Timothy 1:16-19; Romans 12:7; Titus 3:14; Gal. 6:2,10.



**APPENDIX H**  
SERMON SERIES

To Open Your Gift Part I:  
Don't Be Afraid To Use Your Gift  
2 Timothy 1:1-10

The disciple Timothy had come long way- he had traveled with Paul on the Macedonian missionary tour, served time with Paul in jail- and he was put in charge of the churches in Ephesus and Crete.

Paul liked Timothy, trusted him, but Paul realized that Timothy had difficulties- Timothy was young in ministry, tended to be intimidated by strong opposition, and Paul believed Timothy was gifted, but his fear of what could happen-- what could go wrong would get in the way of Timothy using his gifts for the kingdom!

-Some of the older folks in the church didn't want to listen to this "young man" telling them stop playing church and become the church!

-Some of the "know it all" folks who didn't want to submit sound teaching, but wanted to "get it all right now", they want to know the word, but won't take the time to study the word!

So Paul encouraged Timothy to stop focusing on his fear and use the gifts God had given him! Paul knew Timothy was gifted, but even the gifted get scared! Fearful!

Paul told Timothy to (stir up the gift) within him that he might focus on his gift and not his fear! Fear: a concern about something that threatens to bring bad news or results. When you are more worried about what could go wrong than about your service to God, you are operating with a spirit of fear!

A spirit of fear will affect all aspects of your life-  
Afraid of failure (so you don't try)—afraid to achieve (so you make up excuses for not trying)- afraid to confront mediocrity (so you go along with the crowd)

Afraid to believe that God is who God reveals God's self to be!

And if you can't believe that God is then you cannot proceed with power (power requires courage)

- Love (love involves risk)

- Self discipline (not your will but thy will)

The fact is a spirit of fear will paralyze you! Will stop you from trying, will stop you from attempting, and will stop you from dreaming your dream, will stop you from exercising your faith! Don't let the spirit of fear stop you from becoming who God created you to be!

To stir up the gift God gave you:

Operate out of your faith instead of your fear! Verse 7a:

Fear- I can't do it! Faith- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!  
 Fear says- I am too shy to anyone to my church! Faith says- come and go with me to have a good time in the lord! Fear says: I don't know how to deal with the problems in my life! Faith says: my God will make a way out of no way! Fear- I don't have enough money to tithe! Faith- will open the windows of heaven and pour me down an abundant blessing! Do you believe that can pour out a blessing? Say pour out! Not dribble out! Not drop by drop, but pour out!

Use your gifts to conquer your fear! Verse 7b: the first gift we are to use is the gift of prayer! What? Just prayer? Yes! When you understand that you have direct access to God whenever and wherever you are, then you can operate with power through prayer!

Those who operate with prayer will exercise that power over the forces of the enemy!

When they curse you, you have the power to bless them through prayer! When they talk about you, you have the power to pray for them! When you stand in the valley of the shadow of death, you have the power to look to the hills from whence comes your help! Power- to pray—power-to call on the name of the Lord and expect God to answer! Next use the gift of faith! The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen! Through faith you can see what your eyes can't see! By faith you've got to see it before you can see it!

Expect to see the difference! Verse 10: if you are saved, if you are a member of the kingdom of God, a working part of the body of Christ, somebody should see Christ in you! The love of Christ in you! Spreading love is a result of kingdom power! Do you produce love? Peace is result of kingdom power! Do you bring peace into your world? Then you are using the gifts that God gave you to produce the "fruits of the Spirit"! Love! Joy! Peace! Patience! All of these can only come from God! The enemy of God cannot give you Joy! It's not in his nature! When you allow God to stir up what God has already placed within you, you won't be afraid to praise God! To live like you know Jesus!

To Open Your Gift Part II:  
Have You Seen the New Creation?

Isaiah 61: 1-3

In our text this morning we find these words declared by the prophet Isaiah... "the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me..." These words revealed to the prophet by God declared the authority, the role, and the purpose of the Holy Spirit in God's redemptive plan! But when the word of God goes forth it does not stop at mere proclamation! And I have discovered that the word of God serves more than just one purpose. You see, this passage of Scripture also declares the authority, role, and mission of the recipient of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah recognized the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, as the living power of creation! The ancient Hebrews made no distinction between the sacred and the secular! The Spirit of God was just as real in the "world" as it was in the temple, or the "church"! Isaiah was moved by the Holy Spirit to tell the world that the Messiah would be the "Good News", the gospel made flesh, the word of God manifested in human form.

Look carefully at how God works! The same Spirit that moved Isaiah to tell the world of the person and work of the Messiah is the same Spirit that empowered the Messiah to BE the Good News for all humanity! The power that created the world and all we know "came upon" the prophet as a spirit of revelation! Revelation of the intent and desire of God for a creation separated from God by sin! Does anyone know that sin will oppress you? That sin will break your heart? That those who are bound in sin are truly the most miserable of captives?

Those bound by sin may not be in a physical jail cell; they carry their bars around in their minds! But God has a purpose! God has liberation on God's mind! And since God is Spirit, God is perceived through the spirit! And God's will is revealed through the Spirit! God revealed to Isaiah the fact that the Holy Spirit did not stop working after Creation was finished! The fact that the work of the Holy Spirit will not stop until the will of God is felt throughout Creation! The work of liberation performed by the Holy Spirit will not stop until it achieves the ultimate purpose of God! Does anyone here believe that God is a purposeful God? That God is an intentional God?

But if God has a plan, an intent, a desire for creation, in other words for God's creative action to have coherence—the beginning must relate to the middle, and the middle must relate to the end! As Paul declares in Romans 8:28 ... "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his [God's] purpose." For God's creative activity to have coherence, from the beginning to the end, the work of the Holy Spirit did not stop on the seventh day! Yes, the word tells us that God rested from all that God had created, and the Spirit rested as well, but you had better believe on the eighth day the Spirit was back at work!

The Spirit that moved upon the face of the deep, that brought light into the darkness of the void, is the same Spirit that moved upon the prophet and prophetess, equipping them with what to say and exciting them to say it, is the same Spirit that filled Jesus in his earthly ministry! And I submit to you this morning that it is the same Spirit that is the creative power of God present throughout creation!

And it gets better! The Holy Spirit, the creative power of God, present throughout creation, is the same Spirit the prophet Joel foretold would be poured out upon all flesh in

the latter days! The same Spirit Jesus' foretold would be sent to be our Advocate, our Comforter, the same Spirit that breathes, lives, and moves among believers in the world today!

The Holy Spirit is working right now! How do I know? Because the Spirit of the Lord God has been poured out! Poured out upon me! Poured out upon you! And it is performing the work of God in our lives! It is the power of salvation! It is the Spirit of truth! It is the power of believers in the present age to rebuke the deceptions of the enemy! The Holy Spirit is working in the spiritual life of everyone who calls on the name of Jesus!

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon us and endows us with the power to creatively participate in the building of God's Kingdom! John 14:12 records Jesus' promise to all disciples: Whoever believes in me, the work that I do they will do also; and greater works than these will they do because I go to my Father. Are there any disciples here this morning? Anyone believe that if Jesus makes a promise, he will keep it?

And when Jesus ascended to heaven, the place of the full presence of God, he kept his promise! Look at Isaiah 61:1b! Because of the anointing of the Spirit, preachers preach the Good News of a Savior! Because of the anointing Spirit, hearers can receive the Good News of salvation! Because of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom of God is being built on earth! Built by the preached word! Built by those who receive the word! Built by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! Built one saved soul at a time! This is God's ultimate purpose for creation! Through the blood of the Lamb, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we are God's new creation here on earth! A creation that reflects the

original purpose of creation! To live with God! Hallelujah! Not just “through a glass darkly”, but face-to-face! In the fullness of God’s glory! Living as the new creation! To see the new creation:

Understand that God’s nature is creative! God’s will and work did not stop at creation in the beginning! Jesus told Nicodemus “you must be born again” Of the water and the Spirit! In other words, you must be a new creation! Paul said it so well to the church at Corinth “ So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! this is the ongoing creative work of the Holy Spirit! Creating new lives in Christ! New purpose! New opportunities to glorify God! At home! At work! In School! In the house of God!

When you have the Spirit, you creatively participate for the glory of God! When we receive the Spirit, we are endowed with spiritual gifts! Some are gifted with wisdom! Some with knowledge! Some with Compassion! Administration! Helps! Giving! Gifted with everything needed for the Kingdom of God and for body of Christ to glorify God! Finally, to see the new creation:

Look in the mirror! You are made in the image and likeness of God! You are a reflection of the new life that comes through the Spirit! You are God’s image on earth! To show forth the glory of the One who made you! To be salt! To be light! To be a living testimony to the reality and goodness of the Lord! Repeat after me: I am God’s new creation! I have been gifted to glorify God!



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